

THE
E R R O R S
O F
INNOCENCE,
IN
FIVE VOLUMES.

"For tho' I will not practise to deceive,

"Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn."

Shakespeare.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for G. G. J. and J. ROBINSON, No. 25,
Pater-Noster-Row. — 1786.

BRITISH MUSEUM

INNOVATION

FIVE VOLUMES

Printed by the British Museum Press, London.



—————

VOL. I

—————

LONDON

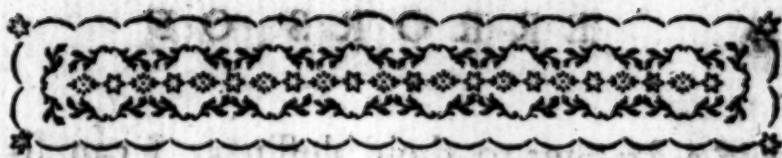
Printed by G. C. & J. for the British Museum Press, London.

ERRATA TO VOLUME I

- Page 26, line 14, for "faintly" read "faintly"
P. 10, l. 20, for "and a" read "and a"
P. 62, l. 2, for "the" read "the"
P. 84, l. 20, for "the" read "the"
P. 97, l. 1, for "the" read "the"
P. 102, l. 3, for "the" read "the"
P. 110, l. 8, for "the" read "the"
P. 112, l. 17, for "the" read "the"
P. 112, l. 25, for "the" read "the"

ERRATA to VOLUME I.

- Page 26, line 14, for fymetry, read fymmetry
P. 40, l. 19, for apear r. appears
P. 65, l. 5, for as bad grace, r. as bad a grace
P. 84, l. 19, for mils, r. mille
P. 97, l. 14, for tempore, r. tempora
P. 109, l. 8, for dounties, r. bounties
P. 140, l. 8, for love, r. lover
P. 159, l. 17, for ftrong, r. weak
P. 256, l. 7, omit the period after tears.



T H E

ERRORS of INNOCENCE.

L E T T E R I.

To the Right Hon. Lord Melrofs, Grosvenor-Square.

My LORD, *Bond-Street, Dec.*

THE style of your last has at length sufficiently convinced me I have nothing left to hope; but tho' you have thus obtained a victory over nature, she is not so easily subdued in my bosom. After alternately appealing to your feelings and integrity, I have found myself equally repulsed by both. Long exempted from the necessity of exercising those qualities, custom has degenerated into impulse; and volunta-

Vol. I.

*B

rily

■ ERRORS OF

ly a stranger to their blessings, I can almost pardon you the wish of shrinking from their reproaches. But remember, that with my hopes you have expell'd my fears; and receive, my Lord, those truths from a stranger, you might forever have banish'd from the lips of a son.

I am not vain enough to suppose my pen has power to eradicate habitual hardness of heart, or views equally nurtured by interest and pride. The man who can tread thus, thro' her offspring, on the ashes of a woman reduced probably by him to the grave, has been too well tutored by the world to let it fathom his feelings on the occasion: and I consider myself simply as an instrument in the hand of a superior power to convince you that tho' surrounded by affluence and pomp, you have planted a thorn in your own bosom no time can pluck away; whose little incessant woundings will become the bane of your felicity

INNOCENCE.

in this world, and hazard its eternal deprivation in the next.

The offers you so generously make me, I reject equally from principle and pride. My commission I also return. Your whole fortune, my Lord, would prove as inadequate towards silencing my reproaches as your own; and I must either be a son to you or nothing.

Chance may, however, at some future period of our lives ordain us once more to meet; how shall I then inwardly pity the aching heart concealed under glitter, and contemplate those wrinkles a harrassing conscience may hasten the hand of time to stamp on your brow! irksome both to yourself and others, every furrow will become the grave of a pleasure. Accumulated wealth, you will then only feel accumulated care; of no other value but to purchase the flattery of sycophants, and the servility of domestics.

4 E R R O R S O F

Unallied to society, the hour which is to separate you from it forever, will find you a solitary neglected being. You may then possibly recollect,—with bitterness, my Lord, recollect, that you had a son whose joy it would have been to have afforded you consolation at a period when every worldly one fails. Whose heart warmly sensible of every tie, wanted only the encouraging hand of a parent to enter with vigor and benevolence into all: and which feels a pang beyond the power of expression, on finding itself cut off from society, and rendered by early disappointment as little capable of receiving, as returning its blessings.

I bid you now, my Lord, perhaps, an eternal adieu. To that world you have early taught me to disesteem I commit my future fate; and tho' precluded its distinctions, I will still dare to deserve its approbation.

I am, my Lord, &c.

HENRY HERBERT ERSKINE.

INNOCENCE

LETTER II.

*To Henry Herbert, Esq. Bond-Street.**

LORD Melross presents his compliments to Mr. Herbert, with the enclosed draft on Messrs. Davenport and Co. but will enter into no further alteration with a young man, who (if he has not already done it) will now have sufficient leisure to repent of that ill-judged pride, which, by rejecting the favours of his only friend, has involved him in certain obscurity and ruin.

Grosvenor-Square.

*Returned—the gentleman having quitted his lodgings

L E T T E R III.

*To the Right Hon. Lady Helen Spenser, Stan-
ton-Audley—From Miss Vernon.*

Pall-Mall, Dec.

HOW shall I satisfy my capricious friend? Too gay or too grave, too kind or too indifferent, you think me capable of endeavouring, by the variety of my attacks, "to extort a confidence you have not to bestow." Believe me I never thought you had till this moment; and you must pardon me, if your jealousy of my intentions, amounts to a proof almost as soon as to a suspicion. For myself I protest I have not a secret that I should fear to tell the whole world; and if I express'd a wish that Lady Somerset had invited me to Stan-ton-Audley, it was simply for the pleasure of seeing you, and of freeing myself from the wrangles of Mrs. Davenport and her son.

INNOCENCE.

7

son. Three months scarce elaps'd since the death of the father, even the respect due to his memory cannot command their discontents: that worthy man had, indeed, long seen them, with an uneasiness only communicated to his daughter and his ward. The former is ever a passive spectator; for myself, I conciliate both parties when I am able, and when otherwise, wisely retire from the storm. Young Davenport is cold, phlegmatic, ungraceful; yet possessed, I believe, of every requisite for the man of business. His mother lively, genteel, strong in her prejudices, and contemning even the virtues that are not accompanied with gallantry and elegance. —Mr. Obrien eminently distinguished for both, stands nearest her heart as her countryman and nephew; and has totally taken place of her nearest ties. Thus situated, every person in the family is, you need not doubt, impatient to see that christmas

ERRORS OF

over, they will never again behold under the same roof. Miss Davenport anticipates the pleasures of Dublin, for which place she sets off in less than a fortnight; and if I did not find some amusement in furnishing my little mansion that is to be, I know not what would become of me.— You would be diverted to see Mrs. Davenport and myself freeze thro' half-furnished rooms, marking out places for girandoles, sophas, &c. each as much pleased with her own whims, and as indifferent to those of the other, as self-love can possibly make her; the scheme of residing together, however, equally pleases both. Mrs. Davenport's jointure is such as raises her above being reported my dependent, she holds a rank in life, and is by no means an unpleasant companion; and on condition she does not tease me about Mr. Obrien, I doubt not but we shall agree very well.— She will have the advantage of my carriage and servants, and I in return, that
of

of her name and protection : for it is sufficiently obvious I could never have entered the world without such, unless I had chosen to accept those of her nephew ; a step I am not quite madcap enough to resolve upon. I am diverted, sometimes however, when on reading those letters of yours I have kept, I am led into recollecting my own ; with the various little plans laid down for my future life, differing according to my progress in it ; and remember that in a few years my present ones will, perhaps, appear equally wild and romantic : yet I cannot deny myself that pleasure, tho' certain my sketches will be only such, till experience, like a fine painter, shall retouch and bring to a perfect picture, what was before but a faint outline. Your sanguine disposition already anticipates future pleasure, and distinction. But how, my dear, are they to be attain'd ? Fortune excepted, I have no advantage my mother wanted, and how in-

sufficient were they all to her happiness; the daughter of a family ennobled by title as well as ancestry, those fatal honours ruin'd the man whom she chose; and his Majesty lost an officer of approved judgment and valour, from the resentment of an irritated minister. Justly incensed at the refusal to promote him, my father's unsuccessful voyage to India was the completion of his misfortunes: and I, perhaps, owe it to the late Mr. Davenport and the father of Mr. Obrien that he ever survived it. To himself, indeed, that obligation was of little value; condemned to struggle with a specious poverty, and sink at last under the mortifications attending it.—Retrospections like these abate the ardour of youth, and teach me rather to dread disappointment than to elevate expectation.—I am, however, far from indulging them; and look upon the gaiety of my disposition, but as a species of gratitude to that singular providence, which inclined my aunt to distinguish

distinguish me by an affluence which I fear will ever be a crime with my relations.— Whatever, therefore, is my destiny, to be unknown is certainly a part of it. Without any one to introduce me into life, excluded, I fear, by the injuries of a parent from my family, a happy mediocrity is both my fate and choice. I would have all who know, esteem me, but not all who esteem, know me. It is the supreme pleasure of delicate minds to have more friends than acquaintance—to be beloved by report—to have their names a passport to the hearts of mankind, and to have their influence extended even where those are not known...

My spirits are alive this morning, tho' the circumstance that caus'd them is a little absurd. When peculiar ideas of curiosity, sympathy or benevolence are excited, the mind receives the impression as water does a pebble, vibrating to its very

B 6

confines.

confines.—You will have some desire, perhaps—but yet it is so childish an affair—I am half ashamed, and will therefore drop it.

No belle or beau, whose highly varnished carriage and new liveries proclaim intended grandeur, was ever more impatient for the birth-day than myself. Have you no hopes of being in town before that time?—I am now really curious—if you have a secret, to whom can you confide it so properly as to one whose affection will be the pledge of her silence? And if not, you ought, in mere gratitude, to be a little eager to see me and my destined habitation.

SOPHIA VERNON.

LET-

INNOCENCE. 12

LETTER IV.

*To Miss Vernon, Pall-Mall—From Lady
Helen Spenser.*

Stanton-Audley. Dec.

IF I did not think I might with propriety return your epithet of capricious, I should be half tempted to quarrel with you for bestowing it on me. Are you so inexperienced as not to know we can least bear, that which we most deserve? How indeed can I escape the contagion? It is in the very air at present: frost, thaw, sunshine and hail succeed one another so rapidly that I defy the heart of a coquette to more sudden transitions.—I remain, nevertheless, exactly what I was: modestly confining my caprices to the disposition of a feather, or the colour of a ribband; meditating no new conquests; and looking forward with pain to that day when I am once more

to

to be set to sale in a drawing-room, at the option of every fool who is entitled to conceal an empty head under a coronet, or an emptier heart under embroidery.

Do not accuse me of impatience—I cannot bear to be trifled with thus any longer; and the less, as I see the weakness of sacrificing our happiness to worldly advantages in my cousin Sutherland; who, I fear, by letters to my father, will accept Sir George Irwin, without a single motive for so doing but interest and ambition.—From her I have had but one letter since we parted; a silence that neither chagrins or surprises me. We were never formed to agree, for she is captious and I am proud: and whilst the idea of dependence gave asperity to her temper, mine but too often caught the ~~the~~ infection. She has, nevertheless a thousand good qualities: and tho' I had not the tenderness that blinds us to faults, I shall ever sympathize in
her

her chagrins; amongst which the being confined to a Convent is not the least: and as the idea of personal rivalry with me was certainly the cause of it, I cannot be surpris'd that she should feel hurt at finding the advantages of nature a misfortune. Sir George is her constant visitor, in consequence of his letters of introduction; tho' his falling in love, was, I believe, the last idea any one of us entertained. You know him: with a good heart and understanding he wants that quickness which renders either agreeable, and which Janetta particularly possesses: besides he is a widower: has two daughters, and is at least thirty years older than herself. Nor can any excuse be offered for the absurdity of his passion, but that infatuation incident at times to the wisest. With my father I believe the objection now lies, who is very much averse to her marrying before me, tho' for both our sakes, I hope that is a whim that will not last.

My

—My mother is highly satisfied with the offer'd settlements, and has some thoughts of permitting Janetta to spend a month in Paris with Madame de Vauricourt.

Lord Melross, and his intended bride, Lady Georgina, are both with us: the former not content with being the handsomest *old* man, and having been the handsomest young one of his age, personates the enamorado to a miracle—sighs, o-gles, plays our fans, and endeavours with admirable ingenuity, to conceal three straggling grey locks under an immense load of powder, with a bagatelle, in the filling of which, he seems to have improved the poets advice, “If there be nothing, put that nothing in;” and Janetta once got into terrible disgrace by humourously singing as she past his chair,

No

No flower that blows
Is like *this* rose
Or scatters such *perfume*.

Lady Georgina is just what she ever was; and but that she has not a single grain of delicacy or understanding, affectation will allow to appear, I should be concern'd for her. The writings are drawn, and Sir Thomas and my father impatient to be rid of their ward; who on her part sees nothing but diamonds and equipages floating in idea before her. We have visited Mount-Herbert, tho' at a season when it is not likely to appear to advantage; but as we have neither auctions, scandal, or beaux, there is no small difficulty in filling up the hours; and I confess I admire the ingenuity of his Lordship, and Sir George, in selecting the time of courtship; since when every thing is hoary *without* we shall be less ready to form invidious comparisons to those within—you find I make rather

ther free with my most noble uncle. Good Heavens! who would believe when they see him sally, like Lord Ogleby, from the dressing-room, all potent in musk, and marchal, to make love to his mistress's lap-dog, whilst she graciously condescends to smile when the more sensible puppy of the two devours the point ruffles of the other, who would believe that he is all keenness, penetration, and eloquence in matters of public business, and ranks in influence and pomp above half our English peers: laughing secretly at my father who toils thro' pamphlets and petitions into an imaginary interest, from which he is perpetually recall'd by the melancholy mementos of empty levees, and news-paper critiques. —My mother, who is now pretty well convinc'd that no more of his Lordship's thousands will ever fill our coffers than the law may allot us, relaxes the gravity of her muscles on the subject of his marriage proportionably; only tempering her smiles with

with some peevish ejaculations on her brother's folly in chusing Lady Georgina: which make me thankful that we are not of a religion which allows of dispensations.

Of all our efforts, however, those we make sometimes to be lively are the worst; in which we are so successful that I really believe any person of real vivacity would die with *ennui* in a week. We sometimes write verses upon cards, and Lord Melrofs, who has practised this amusement in France, gives us whole poems *extempore* from Pope, Waller, and Suckling, with a facility which infinitely surprises and edifies all of us poor souls, who are racking our intractable English brains for a rhyme; I once indeed ventured to hint somewhat of having heard such before, in the humble hope of rescuing poor Prior's laurels from adorning the brows of his Lordship; who turning on his heel with a careless humility,

lity, said, "he believed they had crept into the papers."

How you trifle with my curiosity without gratifying it, by your hints of a circumstance, which tho' important enough to engross your attention, you chuse to suppose unworthy of mine. Do you really think me simpleton enough to believe all those breaks, that disjointed style, merely the effects of *uninterested* benevolence? I think I could venture a trifle without fear of losing it, that your anecdote has a hero; and perhaps I should not widely err if I guessed his name was O'Brien.

I cannot, at present, ascertain when we shall meet, but believe me you do not more ardently desire that time, than does,

Your affectionate,

HELEN SPENSER.

INNOCENCE.

LETTER V.

*To Lady Helen Spenser.—From Miss
Vernon.*

Pal-Mall, Jan.

“CAPRICIOUS, dissembling, and absurd;” a very pretty character you give me truly: if my friend treats me thus, what am I to expect from my enemies? But whether exempted by conscience or vanity, it is certain I do not acknowledge myself in the portrait, and see nothing but a lively imagination ready to seize on the most remote trifles as objects of ridicule or sensibility. *Capricious!* are we not all so? Can you therefore hope to find me an exception? What is it indeed the world calls caprice?—A change of humour for which it knows not how to account—and is that a crime? How many emotions are excited in a feeling breast, of which others
are

are no judge! of which it is even no judge itself, so intricate and trivial are the causes. *Dissembling*—no you are deceived, I never dissemble, and least of all with you: and yet are there not times when by so doing we may suppress troublesome and disagreeable—But, in a word, I never did dissemble. *Absurd*, it is possible I may be; nature herself was so when I was born—else why did she give me a heart alive to every tie, yet leave me destitute of any? Fortunate Lady Helen! you have friends in blood as well as sentiment to engross your affections; friends proud of your perfections and happy in your smiles;—whilst I, a solitary being, glide thro' life unnoticed, but by the number of my servants, or the colour of my coach; and yet you, possessor of all I want, are nevertheless discontented; nor entirely without cause.—The warmth of your sensibility, the liveliness of your imagination, and that vigour your language borrows from both, render you

you the delight and dread of all to whom you are truly known. Uncontroulable when irritated, form'd to charm when pleas'd, there is a generous ardour in your very virtues, which appearing to rob them of the merit of principle, bestows the more engaging one of passion. To you I early gave my heart, nor have ever wish'd to withdraw it: a similitude of feelings render'd the gift in some degree worthy your acceptance, and the romance of youth has rivetted our friendship—let me then in that right play the monitress; if my lessons are unseasonable impute them to spleen and forget them: if otherwise, forget them still as mine. Partiality, rather than reason is the fuel of friendship, and when the latter intrudes too much, like day-light admitted to a fire, it is apt to extinguish it. I would wish to chuse for my friend a person of reflection, but forget ever after that they were such.

Your

Your situation at present is undoubtedly trying. To be ushered into the world as a prodigy—to be excluded familiarity lest it should lessen admiration, and know yourself a victim previously devoted to the ambition of your family, are indeed bitter causes of mortification. But in enumerating your evils how many blessings do you overlook! The habitation of a parent is a kind of enchanted ground; protected by his influence even when it is invisible—a stranger to his cares—respected thro' his years, we scarce know, till we have dissolved it, the magically guarding spell which diffuses itself over mankind in the name of father. For the moral world is like the natural, beautiful on a general survey, but full of a thousand minuter precipices, which the mental eye is no more able to discern than the bodily one whilst at a distance; and do you not pity Miss Sutherland for sacrificing the happiness of the future to the caprice of the present?



My benevolence then it seems, appears mighty ridiculous to you? Believe me it will appear much more so when you are acquainted with the foolish tale I alluded to; which is indeed so mere a nothing that I should hardly prevail on myself to give it, did I not know your knack of converting pigmies into giants, unless you have their exact dimensions.

On the day I wrote my last a restless night had induc'd me to rise early, tho' Mrs. Davenport is much too genteel to breakfast till ten at least; but as I found her daughter up, a whim sufficiently odd led us into the park: the air, tho' bitter, was fine, and we had walk'd half way up the Mall without meeting a single creature above the degree of a centinel, when a gentleman past; the trees were between us, and therefore I saw little of his face, but Miss Davenport excited my curiosity by observing him. I

glanc'd my eyes round with some confusion on meeting his, which pass'd over us as he turn'd abruptly, but repell'd by ours, were instantly withdrawn with that sparkling quickness which speaks an irritated and absent mind. That he was handsome, is a phrase at once vague and inadequate; yet it is all I can offer. His height had just that advantage over the middle size which either gives grace or destroys it; and even the emotion which lent such vigor to his step, scarce withdrew from his features the indescribable charm which seems the mingled result of symetry and temper. Whether his hair was dark or light, his nose aquiline, Grecian or simple English, I will not romance so far as to determine: his eyes alone impress'd themselves upon my memory, with the penetrating brilliance peculiar to the dark. His air, which was that of a man who had spent the night in restlessness and agitation, the disgust with which he seem'd to regard every object, in

a word, a thousand combining trifles interested me in his fate.

Be it poverty, guilt, or misfortune, which oppresses him thought I, is there no being to participate in those feelings, which seem to succeed it with so much bitterness? Can a man who carries dignity of soul in his very aspect, want one to whom that soul is known? Weak reasoning! excluded from society by his vices or his follies, that man was perhaps inwardly execrating the hypocrisy of a mistress, or the chance of a dice box.—That animation which mounted to his eye and suffus'd his cheek, was perhaps the glow of shame, or the involuntary swell of remorse. Perhaps too—but why should I think further of a being in whose fate I shall never be interested?

Mr. Obrien breakfasted with us; and whether it is natural to women to be silent

lent on some topics I know not, but I confess I felt no inclination to recount the circumstances of the walk to him, tho' Miss Davenport was tiresomely loquacious upon it.

Your portraits of the intended bride and bridegroom are diverting enough, but surely Lord Somerset is not entirely right in uniting such opposite ages, at a period when the hope of unbounded indulgence blinds her to every misery. Delicacy and understanding are not necessary to teach us to feel error, but how highly will they be so, to enable us to endure its consequences! Adieu.

Your's ever,

SOPHIA VERNON.

L E T-

LETTER VI.

To Mr. Herbert—From Sir George Irwin.

My dear Herbert, Paris. Dec.

THE strongest proof of friendship I can at present give you is one, which will be only valuable as such; I mean that of writing the first opportunity: which I also do the more willingly as it will answer the treble purpose of kindness, advice, and reproof; the last rather incurr'd I believe by your thoughtlessness than intentional neglect, and therefore easily pardon'd.

I am not so ignorant of the sympathy of years as to suppose a man of five and thirty, an equally agreeable confidant with one of five and twenty, tho' I believe I may safely affirm him to be the abler adviser; and therefore on this occasion think myself every way more entitled to your attention than Obrien. Situated as you are,

believe me that young man's impetuosity will more probably injure than assist you, you have too much of it yourself and yet there is this difference between you that his is in his temper, and yours in your heart. The same motive therefore that renders him light, inattentive, fiery, and self-sufficient, produces in you pursuits more noble, and more elevated conduct, tho' mingled with a haughtiness that I will be ingenuous enough to warn you of. To think too highly of our friends, and too meanly of our enemies, is to infer a species of distinction in our regard, and teach the latter even to suppose themselves indebted for it to caprice, rather than to a candid and rational conviction of merit.

Mr. Obrien has good sense, good nature, and the volatility natural to his years and country, but of the ties of life or of its subordinations he cannot judge, because he knows neither, from having acquir'd a dangerous

gerous independence in the early loss of his father: *Yours*, my dear Herbert, is a self-lover; his whole life has prov'd it: possess of every external honor, misfortune has never shewn him the value of internal. A seat in the House of Peers, a star and ribbon, the smiles of the sovereign, and the adulation of his creatures, have taught him to consider all to whom he does not appear a kind of idol, as wretches beneath his notice; every attempt therefore to open his eyes, and place him on a level with the rest of his fellow creatures, will be consider'd as an insolent infringement on his dignity: for he is like a man wrapt up in a heavy sleep, which your efforts may render uneasy without awakening him from. I cannot reflect without pain how far two dispositions like yours and Obrien's may be induc'd to irritate him; and grieve that I am not on the spot to interfere. Nay pardon me if I fear your pen less than your presence: in writing we

necessarily use a degree of reflection, but an eye like yours, when animated with the sense of injury, would be too severe a check for a man less haughty than your father. If we would live in the world my dear friend, we must yield a little to it in what regards others; for the *energy* of goodness I am afraid is much oftener apt to disgust than amend. Few men are guilty of either vices or failings without inwardly annexing some degree of criminality to them, and perhaps we should sooner reclaim by proportioning our censure to their standard than our own; to do otherwise is to suppose them capable of feeling all that horror at the idea of guilt, of which a virtuous mind is susceptible: representations so black strike them as extravagant prejudices; and of all the enemies of virtue not one is so formidable as that fatal idea, which transfers a fault from ourselves to the admonisher. Attack Lord Melross then, where alone he is vulnerable, in his pride and his tenderness.

ness. Inspire him not with contempt of himself, but kindness towards you. Act the part of a son, and it will be an effectual touchstone whether his heart will ever respond as the father. If, as I fear will be the case, you are unsuccessful, turn your eyes to other views. You are hardly three and twenty, have an excellent understanding, and more real learning than falls to the share of most men; use those acquisitions: certain that next to entering the world in a distinguish'd light, our highest advantage is to be unknown there. In him who claims nothing either from birth or fortune, and from whom therefore, according to worldly computations, nothing is expected, every proof of genius, fidelity, or knowledge, will be look'd upon with surprise, and encourag'd by kindness.— His superiority will be regarded as a prodigy, not a rivalship; and thus satisfying l'amour propre, many will voluntarily yield to him, what they would not to such as

set out with the same advantages as themselves. You will certainly be cast below the sphere to which your talents entitle you, and that is too apt to sour the noblest disposition: yet by such a rule might not Socrates (with much more justice than Diogenes) have turn'd cynic? Think whenever you find yourself expos'd to mortifications that it is not you to whom they were address'd, nor can you with justice resent, what circumstances, independent of character, alone have subjected you to.

When you want a friend you know where to seek him; one whom nothing but vice can alienate, and to whom you will be endear'd by misfortune. If you resolve on the line of life pointed out, you need only call again on the Duke: I have my reasons for knowing his Grace's promises were not those of a mere statesman, The army I intreat you will not urge me further upon! I lost an only and beloved son
in

in it, and on a quarrel I knew repugnant to his strongest ideas of justice; nor can I think without horror of consigning any one I value to a similar fate.

I must now hasten to conclude, and shall inclose this to Obrien, since he will undoubtedly know to a certainty where you are. Be happy, my dear boy, wherever that is! reconcile yourself to your fate; for I already consider you as abandoned by your father, since the acknowledging you, and marrying Lady Georgina are circumstances wholly incompatible; and the latter is a view his heart will not easily lose sight of.

Write to me by every opportunity, and assure yourself you will never have a sincerer friend than

Your Affectionate,

GEORGE IRWIN.

LETTER VII.

*To Sir George Irwin, Bart. Paris—From
Mr. Herbert.*

C—, Jan.

CAST off from the only being on earth whose protection I was entitled to claim, I accept, my dear Sir George, your generous offer: nor is my sense of its kindness diminish'd, however, intrinsically consider'd, it may fall short of those views the late discovery open'd to me. The church I must once more repeat I cannot think of: to be in peace with Heaven I find a stretch of philosophy, but to be so with man an impossibility: and pardon me if I add, that however meritorious it may be to yield with a phlegmatic resolution to penury and obscurity, the being who gave me a claim to distinction, inspir'd me with the love of it. An active soul lives

to

to somewhat above the common drudgeries of life, and I can scarcely value an existence which can only be preserv'd by the debasement of those feelings which render it desirable.

I have not at present sufficient calmness to relate the altercation between Lord Melrofs and myself; it was too opposite to your advice to give you pleasure, and too decisive to be further pursued. Obrien cannot influence me, since I have scarce seen him for some days past. He brought me your letter early on Wednesday morning, but the agitation of my mind having kept me up all night, I was rambling in the park, and tho' I call'd at his lodgings before I quitted town, he was gone out to breakfast.

I am now endeavouring to bury reflection with Captain Roberts; surrounded by beings

beings utterly remote from all I have ever yet mingled with, and impatient to try that element where so many wanderers like myself have either found their object or their grave. To you, my dear Sir George, my gratitude is eternally due: I will cherish that sentiment in every clime, since it is the only pleasing one left to your

your advice to give you pleasure, and too dear to be further pursued. H. H. E. cannot influence me, since I have since left him for some days past. He brought me your letter early on Wednesday morning, but the agitation of my mind having kept me up all night, I was trembling in the park, and called at his lodgings before I could go to bed. I was out to breakfast.



I am now endeavouring to busy myself with Captain Roberts, surrounded by

L E T-

LETTER VIII.

To Mr. Herbert—From Mr. O'Brien.

St. James's-Street, Jan.

BUT that thou art the veriest misanthrope in the three kingdoms, and as little grateful for the advice of a friend as a sick man for that of a physician, I should not have suffer'd so much time to elapse before I wrote. The interim however I have allotted thee to peruse the sermon I have, (against my conscience I confess,) transmitted thee from Sir George: not suffering my own little delectable epistle, to interrupt the soft slumbers produc'd by so excellent a soporific.

Why thou true Englishman!—that is, thou gloomiest of the gloomy! wilt thou impeach the birth thou art solicitous to prove

prove by a despondency so inconsistent? Where is the volatile spirit of France which should dance thro' thy veins as thro' its natural current? Where is the presuming officiousness? The pert insipidity? As far from thee as the parchment physiognomy, black eye-brows, and skeleton sides. Yet cherish a little of the mother; it will be of more service than the fawning of the Scotchman, or the surly independence of the Englishman. The first is a fool because he shews you he *does* mean to deceive, and the latter because he shews you he *does not*. The one puts you on your guard against your own frankness, the other tempts you to take advantage of his. It is the Irishman alone who is truly form'd to prosper; it is the Irishman alone to whom every virtue and vice appear equally natural, who can adopt all characters without ever seeming to depart from his own, and infusing the fire of his country into every pursuit, dazzle by its brightness or claim

claim excuse from its ardor. So much for the honest sons of St. Patrick, to whose patronage I would more willingly see you committed than that of Neptune; for he is at best but an uncertain friend. Sir William,* with as much will to serve you, would have ten times the power of Sir George; and you cannot doubt but my interest with him would have been sufficient. Do not mistake however,—I do not mean to send you to Ireland to *make* your fortune, but to learn *how* to make it. It is the only country where a man may commence gentleman at will. —The Englishman enquires your estate—the Scotchman demands your pedigree—the Irishman expects nothing but a good sword and a decent assurance, and is he not the winner of the three? Fortune and birth are advantages the finest fellow upon earth might

*Sir William Nugent, Uncle of Mr. O'Brien.

might want, but he must be a dull dog indeed who cannot muster the others.

In a word, you know I will serve you, you have reason to think I can, and as to the manner of the offer, if the existence of both depended upon it I could adopt no other. The condition of my finances is not at present extraordinary, as the blind goddess has not been very favorable to me of late, and even two thousand a year can feel its wants. Nevertheless command me if necessary. Our Count I find by experience to be what we expected, tho' if my discernment had wak'd a little sooner she would have sav'd me many hundreds.

The affair with Lady Helen is long over. Lady Somerset finds a tall handsome young fellow too irresistible herself, to trust her daughter-in-law with him; besides they talk of marrying her to the Duke of C—, and

and as I am not inclin'd to wear the willow long, you need not doubt but my vows are offer'd elsewhere.

A line when you have leisure and good-humour, till which time conclude me as usual, -

Yours to Command,

G. OBRIEN.

Prythee my good friend what possels'd thee to throw up thy commillion? Art thou ignorant of the charms of a cockade? The substitute for merit and the pledge of fortune? Compose thy mighty spirit and take it back again, if thou wouldst have me think thee not quite fit for Bedlam.

L E T-

LETTER IX.

*To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen
Spenser.*

Stanton-Audley, Jan.

THE lassitude which generally steals upon an uneasy mind must be my apology for not immediately answering yours, which to say truth merited a more punctual correspondent, considering that it contains a capital incident in the history of our lives, and deserves commemoration for every thing but the blindness of the hero; an imperfection rather out of the line of romance, and which it were to be wish'd you had not so exactly specified, even tho' his eyes had sparkled with ten times more brilliance. I will not deny however but I have so much of my sex in
me

me as to find sorrow infinitely touching in a handsome set of features, and rather triumph in finding you have the same, even with the terrible drawback of being overlook'd.

To say I am ill would be a falshood; and yet to say I am well is a worse. Lady Georgina I believe fancies I have a design upon her french night-cap, which I can assure her Ladyship however I should be far from coveting if it was only from fear of reminding my beholders of its owner. A new-fashion'd robe de chambre has already cost her two days indisposition, and should her Majesty of France unfortunately bethink herself of another Lady Georgina's recovery would certainly be postpon'd for a week.

Miss Sutherland, Sir George writes my father word, has finally consented. Strange Girl!

Girl! Of a character at once mark'd and incomprehensible: from the keenness of her observations we should judge she thought much, did not our own convince us to the contrary. She has some refinement in her head, but it never reach'd the heart: and with a good deal of feeling, little sensibility. Perhaps you will smile at so Irish an expression; and yet to me it is not nonsense. By sensibility I understand a certain tender sympathy of disposition, which tho' originally deriv'd from the passions, is meliorated into somewhat gentler and more pleasing than those, whilst feeling is that quick sense of insult or injury which is exerted rather for ourselves than others. A cobweb refinement! but nevertheless there are some of this nature which the mind involuntarily adopts.

To return however to Janetta. With a vanity which makes her aspire to be a
general

general object of admiration, she has not courage to deserve to be such; and is flatter'd with the idea of a capacity of which she willingly resigns the advantages. Alas! can she really at twenty resolve upon entering into life by a sacrifice that will embitter it? Insensible to that sweet union of hearts, form'd by invisible ties, which centering every wish in one dear object renders him the arbiter of our fates. Which—what keeps you in that odious London?—Oh! if you were near me! But thus it is that we are oblig'd to purchase the reputation of beauty by banishing the very chance of rivalship.

* * * * *

Does the world contain half a dozen beings who know how to distinguish between reflection and melancholy, or if it does

does will it be ever my good fortune to meet with more than one? I almost despair of it I assure you; and yet I am of so frank a disposition that when some of our fashionable small talkers accuse me of being a misanthrope, I am tempted to tell them I retire because I will not be such.

You know little of me when you call me uncontrollable; like most of my sex indeed I have my hours of obstinacy, but my courage, as I was told by a person you will one day love dearly, resembles that of a man who hits you a great box on the ear and then runs away: so terrified at the valor of his own exploit that he never dreams of seconding it. I am very spleenetic to day as my letter declares, for we have been thrown into a general confusion by an adventure of my brother's, who has, in his usual style, been in treaty with a Jew for five hundred pounds at an interest truly

truly jew-like. When lo! on the very day when the golden shower was to have fallen, the intercepting a suspicious note discover'd the whole to my mother—by my uncle's interposition however it is pardon'd, and Spenser is gone with many wise admonitions to town, all of which he will doubtless profit as much by as formerly. And why indeed should a man of fashion stupify himself with musty morals, when he can spend his time so much more pleasantly at a gaming table at the trifling expence of two or three thousand a night? And where is the difference to his country whether the money is in the hands of the titled or untitled gambler? Especially considering the respectable figure many of our nobility make at present, withering on estates which the next heirs are impatient to rescue from bonds and mortgages, like a dry leaf on the end of a bough whence it is no longer able to derive moisture. And how

Vol I.

D

would

would history be ennobled if an irruption of the modern Gauls should find our senators, not indeed quite like those of Rome with the purple robe and ivory sceptre, but with a jockey hat and a dice box? They teize me to go with a party of my uncle's making to see the Juno, but I am ill and shall stay at home.—*Adieu*

H. SPENSER.



LET

L E T T E R X.

To George Obrien, Esq.—From Mr. Herbert.

C—, Jan.

HAVING yourself refer'd this to the return of my good humour you ought rather to be surpris'd at my diligence than neglect; for a wounded temper requires more time to recover than the lightness of yours can conceive, and the disposition I was in a few days since made me more apt to suspect our correspondence of commencing from the Antipodes than C—. Yet here I still am; more splenetic than sad. "Sad" did I say? Hang it! a proud heart knows not the meaning of so womanish a word—and yet George that same pride is the worst companion a man can have in adversity, especially if it is his only one. It is the poison with which we ourselves furnish

our enemies to dip every arrow in, rendering those wounds mortal which would otherwise have slightly glanc'd over us—to have done however with metaphor. Imagination has been so often rack'd to invent new modes of acknowledgment suitable to vanity, ostentation, or benevolence, that nothing now remains but the simple language of the heart. The kind interest you express in my affairs will never be forgotten, and would I have done less for you, I would thank you more for being willing to do so much for me. Your raillery on Sir George I can easily pardon—it is the natural product of a keen head and a gay heart. Sir William might have done more for me but I ought not to think so.—Whatever Sir George did, whatever he propos'd to do, was with the warmth of a benevolent man and the delicacy of a refin'd one. He gave with that grace which ennobles the favor by making it appear not the overflowing of his own desert, but a
tribute

tribute due to mine, and less a mark of his superiority than deference. That insipidity for which he appears so ridiculous in your eyes is the fault of an acquaintance, but his virtues, my dear Obrien, are those of a friend, and in that light I shall ever regard him with affection and respect.—So thus ends my notable digression on generosity and gratitude; at which you have my free leave either to laugh or to yawn as best suits the humor of the moment: and by way of enlivening an epistle so little suited to your risible faculties I shall insert an anecdote of my father and Lady Georgina, not indeed much more likely to awaken them, but as food for that curiosity with which we in my opinion very unjustly tax the other sex, when we have an equivalent degree in our own: at least so says conscience; and for once you will perhaps side with her.

The fair bride, in future, you find I have seen. Shall I give you my opinion of her as a man or a son-in-law? In the latter character I might, with poetical propriety, observe that she is as artful as well as beautiful as Dalilah, has more deceits than smiles, that the bloom on her cheek is like that of a plumb, pernicious whilst tempting, that—in short all that the envious of her own sex, or the jilted of ours, ever said against woman. But I was not guilty of so gross a prejudice—I view'd her with the eyes of a man, and the passions of a young one: and found her (what indeed from account I had not suspected) a most winning creature. A youthful slightness gave charms to that womanly dignity which alone commands respect. A soul-glowing complexion; yet features whose combining sweetness scarce appear'd to derive a grace from that. And this lovely girl is to be sacrific'd to the caprice of Lord Somerfet and the — — (help
me

me to a word not too coarse (George) of my father. Lady Helen, however beautiful, can be but her second; and the pride of the Spenser family, foster'd by the universal admiration the latter excites, can ill brook a competition of such a nature. I am wandering from my intention, which was to relate facts, not their impressions: but my soul rises at the selfish and sordid views of one half of the world to which the other are thus sacrific'd.

Any place being now preferable to London, my time here has been spent with Captain Roberts, who with all the noisy joviality of a true seaman, has undertaken to shake off my gloom. I was by him repeatedly prest to mingle with the company, who since his Majesty's visit, have continually resorted to see the ship—this however the pride of my nature as repeatedly induc'd me to decline; not that I fear'd his treating me

otherwise than as an equal, and knew they treated him as such : but to be unknown is a crime amidst the great, nor could I brook the idea that any man, whatever his rank, should reproach himself with having been deceiv'd into a politeness I was not entitled to demand : for people will more easily pardon him who cheats them of their money than their civility ; blushing for having fail'd in that *acquir'd* discernment which enables us to distinguish an inferior, tho' they think it no disgrace to want that natural share which generally points out a knave. My curiosity however was at length awaken'd by the mention of a party from Stanton-Audley ; and (as they are both there) I doubted not but my father and Lady Georgina were included in it. To shorten my tale, I equip'd myself *en matelot* and resolv'd to view them in masquerade. For this I had I confess two reasons—the first simply that of gratifying myself, and the second a last struggle to
awaken

awaken if possible the dormant conscience of Lord Melross, by the sight of an only son in those habits of penury to which he might have been condemn'd, but for the partiality of a man on whom that was his only claim.

The day was exquisitely fine; a mild frost: the sun at once enliven'd and warmed, and a collation and band had been appointed by Captain Roberts whose patron I find is Lord Somerset. Another party however, known to those who came from Stanton-Audley, and of which Mrs. Davenport (your aunt) was one, mingled with them; and my uncertainty amidst so many ladies of her whom I was desirous of seeing, had nearly frustrated my scheme. They dispers'd however at length; and of those of the company whom curiosity left upon the deck, I soon fancy'd I discern'd the two whom I sought: they were in conversation, and as far as I could

judge the topic was not unentertaining; for she smil'd *with* him, and by a peculiar arch depression of her eye I sometimes thought *at* him—whilst he—faith George! an old debauchee is a most hideous animal; to see with how voluptuous a pleasure they hang over every bloomy feature, languishing with eyes from which age has exhal'd that fluid brightness which alone can render languishment pleasing; the meaningly unmeaning orbs faded into a watry grey like a wither'd and half crush'd plumb, whilst the lids, tenacious of separation, twinkle and wink by turns, an omen of that approaching hour when they must close forever. How must the rich tide which flows with such tumultuous softness to the cheek, and throbs in the pulse even of the chastest woman at the gaze of an approv'd and youthful lover, how I say must it congeal before one like this!

Womens

Women's disgusts it is said are strong and obvious. Let them not contradict the assertion, for that they should be so is the noblest proof of their chastity. There is a natural antipathy in minds thoroughly pure, which, (as is said to be the case in all antipathies) renders their very perceptions keener than those of others. Nature gives to their feelings that penetration we acquire by study and observation, and did the same degree of reflection mature them, I fear our rank in creation would hardly be the first.—Endless digressor! proceed sayest thou! “patience and shuffle the cards” in the language of Durandartè. For, to be honest my dear Obrien, there never yet I believe was that man either public or private who scribbled merely for the diversion of others—it is a contradiction in nature—and when a home topic occurs they want only the frankness to exclaim with the female Author

For as, untouch'd how we succeed,
 'Tis for yourselves, not us you read,
 So still (proceeding to requite,)
 'Tis for ourselves, not you, we write :
 Betray'd by solitude to try
 Amusements which the prosp'rous fly.

Fancy then, (for fancy is in thee as strong
 and almost as much turn'd towards the ludi-
 crous as in a woman, and that is saying the
 utmost of it, for there is a wicked vein in
 the sex to which ours owe half their defeats,
 and many a pretty fellow has been undone
 by an out of the way phrase, a chance clum-
 sy bow, or an ill-powder'd toupet.) Fan-
 cy you see the old beau, perhaps not quite
 so odious, but full as laughable as in my
 portrait, stalking along the deck, one hand
 escorting the lady, who seem'd indeed

“ Like radiant truth
 Led forward by the hoary hand of time.”

The

The other gracefully waving, as if to keep the poize: or perhaps command to their due distance all such ignoble figures as myself, when lo! at the very moment when every feature had been screw'd to its proper degree of softness, and each eye was on the direct ogle, an unlucky side-glance fix'd both full on me. Not Atlas when he felt the first cold chill at sight of the petrifying shield ever display'd a countenance of more astonishment, and in truth tho' I had not absolutely the face or locks of a Gorgon, my features were not too engaging. Perceiving however I had sufficiently fix'd his attention, I instantly withdrew my eyes, and advanc'd to quit the place: in which case it was necessary I should pass them—in so doing I saw with amazement that Lady Georgina was now alone and with still greater, found myself the next moment address'd by her—a proud blush suffus'd my cheek, and, tho' unknown, the contemptible light in which I appear'd to

woman so form'd to inspire the desire of pleasing, gave me a sensation too mortifying for reason to counteract. In a word the old beau was sufficiently reveng'd had he known it. The confusion of the moment exceeds all recollection, and I was scarce sensible she had offer'd me assistance till with a tremulous accent she added she was commission'd to do so by a gentleman who interested himself in my fate. That devil pride again I doubt not crimson'd my complexion—to hear him once more offer me the miserable dependence I had so often rejected, and that thro' the very woman for whom he had disown'd and abandon'd me, revived all the indignation I had studied to suppress.

“The consistent duplicity of the gentleman you allude to madam,” return'd I with inexcusable bitterness, “will ever render his name unnecessary. Let him conceal

“ceal it for my sake as well as his own,
“left I should one day blush for the reflect-
“ed disgrace.” Tears, painful, tho’ im-
proving tears, instantaneously suffus’d those
eyes but a moment before all sympathetic
sweetness, and I perceived too late I had
involuntarily distressed a heart ignorant of
my injuries, and laboring under the deli-
cacy of sex, and decorum of rank. If my
countenance did justice to my feelings how-
ever that heart will surely grant my par-
don; and I made some atonement to her
pride by adding that “my language could
“only be excus’d in the consideration of the
“merit my silence might contribute to sa-
“crifice: since losing her would be at once
“the severest and most just of all punish-
“ments.” and with this hint I made my
bows and departed; not doubting but if
she has the curiosity of a woman, and the
spirit of a just one, she will not rest till she
has develop’d my meaning, and aided my
views

views as far at least as in refusing my father. Restoring my borrow'd habiliments as soon as I had seen them to the carriages, I return'd to my solitary lodgings to write long harangues and study Seneca.

Sir George's letter I inclose as a simple proof how much the heart informs the head; it has neither the seducing charms of lightness, or the flowers of rhetoric to recommend it; but upon the whole it contains the best advice that could be given in my situation, nor is it always ill express'd. The understandings of many dawn on objects as slowly as the morning, but that very slowness frequently affords a clearer examination of them than the sudden blaze of brilliant capacities—had I been guided by his councils I had perhaps been more successful, but reflection is now useless. I have determin'd my own fate; yet such is the weakness of reason or the
force.

force of pride, that tho' I condemn myself for not acting as he directs on occasions irretrievable, I can scarce do so on those now in my power, and submit to fall with as bad grace as the gentleman to whom I have the honor of writing shews, when complaisance obliges him to attend to the sermons of an old man, or the coquetry of an old lady. And in order that this may not be mistaken by its length for a lecture from the one, or a love epistle from the other, I shall conclude myself

Yours,

H. H. E.

L E T.

L E T T E R XI.

To Lady Helen Spenser—From Miss Vernon.

Pall Mall, Jan.

YOUR dear obliging, fidgetting uncle has added to the favor he before confer'd on me that of giving me an opportunity of writing immediately, and to both that of his company for two hours this morning on the important business of my health, which you may assure yourself was much mended by such a compliment: for, not to mention the contagion of good spirits, mere shame ought to prevent my being less gay and airy at twenty than his Lordship at threescore. The ease with which I yielded, after our rencontre at C—, to the agreeable violence he us'd to draw me to Stanton-Audley, has given him an opinion of my complaisance not to be eras'd; and I am indebted to his

his self-love for esteeming that a favor to him, which I intended merely as such to myself. It is with chagrin I perceive that you are far from well, and with still more that your indisposition is as much mental as bodily; I wait with impatience the moment of our meeting, when I shall demand that frankness I have display'd by recounting to you my ridiculous adventure at C—, of which I cannot yet think without a mingled blush of anger and confusion; but you are deceiv'd if you suppose it retains any longer the slighted mixture of curiosity.

To have violated the delicacy of my *sex myself* would have been sufficiently mortifying on reflection: but to have that violation misconstrued and return'd by him whom it was intended to serve, is what I cannot forget. Would I had never seen the inside of a ship! or that Mr. Obrien had consented to accompany us: he would
have

have been too constantly with me to have allow'd me a moment's conversation with a stranger, and I too timid to have attempted it. But the conviction of absolute pecuniary distress on his part, the temptation of being so abruptly left by Lord Melrofs, the other so near me—in short impulse drew me most powerfully to commit an error I had so much cause to regret, Mrs. Davenport return'd delighted with your politeness to her at Stanton-Audley, and speaks of you in the highest terms. I alone, vex'd at the hasty scheme which had not allow'd me to prepare our meeting, and still more at my own absurd benevolence, had no relish either for the gallantries of Lord Melrofs or the curiosity of Obrien. His Lordship, who looks to me like Time's younger brother, will by his complaisance cost me a new pen, and an impression so beautiful it will be almost cruel to spoil it.—Do not mistake however!—he designed it perhaps for my heart, but I shall transfer

transfer the favor to my wax. Write to me I beg; since even tho' you tell me nothing new, it will be some kindness to reconcile me to myself. Obrien has been endeavoring to do it by a world of fine things, besides telling me he heard me toasted three different times in as many places, all in the course of an evening: I thank'd him for the information for two reasons, first because it gave me a proof of my own perfection, and secondly of his volatility, both of which I was very desirous of being convinc'd of. He laugh'd, and with a countenance that shew'd me he did not speak truth, protested (after the masculine manner of protestation) that it was not at a tavern, tho' he convicted himself twice in less than a quarter of an hour. I do not indeed believe him a downright libertine, but a gay air, a fashionable life, and a levity of conversation, partly natural and partly assum'd, bring him too near it. I cannot
approve

approve even of affecting the manners of vice. Customs are little rivulets which the first storm may swell till they sweep away all before them. We should use ourselves to speak what we think, lest in time we should be influenc'd to think what we speak. Thus the depravity of the tongue may communicate itself to the heart, and we may find ourselves insensibly the slaves of vices we despise. He heard me as gravely as if he intended to mind me, and minded me as much if he had never heard me; trifling afterwards so agreeably with Miss Davenport that I fell in with him involuntarily, as I believe he intended I should. They talk'd much of our late excursion, and whether or no he perceiv'd me a little embarrass'd I cannot say, but he was very minute in his enquiries of what we saw, and how we were entertain'd: towards the latter part of the evening however he was urgent with me, even to kneeling, to
suffer

suffer the furnishing of my house to go on in his name. Mrs. Davenport too prest him upon me to the utmost ; and the folly of not having sufficiently discourag'd him at first, left me almost at a loss how to do it now. I was obstinate however in declining my decision for a year at least; that time I will devote to mingling with the world. A young mind when utterly secluded from it, is too apt to form a fantastic idea of its happiness or misery, and the extremes are equally fatal : nor would I willingly indulge those peculiarities which are contracted in retirement. In a moderate intercourse with society the mind, like marble, becomes polish'd by friction, and tho' it may faintly reflect every image imbibes none ; only displaying its natural beauties to more advantage ; and why should I neglect those adventitious graces, which tho' found chiefly in the frivolous or dissolute of my sex may either conciliate
or

or preserve affection? In them those insidious attractions too often supply the want of the more estimable. And would their influence be weaken'd were they united with such? For my own part I would wish to be as agreeable as if I were not virtuous, and as virtuous as if I were not agreeable; modelling my mind to the graces as I would my person, with the advantage of having it more in my power; and that I can do so, is to me the chief blessing of affluence, for penury is as fatal to bodily as mental elegance. The mind cramp'd to low and and menial habits loses even with the best that punctilious delicacy which lends it charms: unable to confine others to the same, thrown by circumstances into uneasy familiarity, the refinement which blesses us would to them be a curse; and virtue ought to be the attraction in low life, since it is the only one that can be cherish'd in any degree of perfection.

Receive

Receive then oh world! one votary more, in addition to those who wander incessantly in thy labyrinth, in search of felicity; with youth, health, and fortune I enter upon thy mazes; ardently desirous of making others happy, and if possible, of being so myself.

S. VERNON.

LETTER XII.

To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen Spenser,

Stanton Audley, Jan.

YOUR letter, my dear Sophia, was the perfect emblem of the heart which dictated it. Sweet and engaging enthusiasm! how much ought we to regret the necessity of losing thee: yet such is the fatality of this life, that we are oblig'd to sacrifice one half of our virtues to secure the other: to resign the simplicity which ornaments youth, for the caution which disgusts even in age, and almost become profelytes to the world, for fear of being one day its dupes. Early plung'd into life, a spectator, rather than sharer of it's turbulence, I am well enabled to judge. The tie of benevolence is so weaken'd in it, that I am afraid the noblest exertions are valued only as they happen to touch the individual

individual who can steal time enough from the vortex of pleasure to reflect upon them. Have they serv'd *himself*? A momentary sensation of gratitude may probably arise; if otherwise, it is but an obligation on society; and as each wisely forgets he makes one of that number, the benefit remains unvalued, and the benefactor unrespected. Each speaks, thinks and acts for himself singly, and therefore becomes cold, interested and unjust; to seek out merit through the veil of inferiority, to furnish it with the *opportunity* of shining (that most difficult of all things to such as are undistinguish'd in station) in a word, the wish of cherishing, is lost. The great, wrap themselves up in a frivolous consequence—the little, in an unjustifiable contempt. Ah! did they but know how useful they might be to each other, how endearing!—But—no matter—we shall one day meet—and pardon me if till then I preserve my silence.

If I have been malevolent or rash in what I have said, reprove me. I wish to think well of those with whom I am to associate. Nay I have so far a good opinion of the world, as to believe the self-delusion which reigns in it, almost beyond imagination. Too apt to yield to our first impressions, the passions gain ground, whilst the light of reason, however efficient it would have been at first, is too feeble when they are illumin'd, and the moment of examination neglected, all objects afterwards appear in false colors.

Something you must have guess'd has given birth to so sage a discourse. In truth an event not unimportant in itself, and far from it in it's consequences; family discords are odious, but on such topics, on *money* matters doubly so.

The papers must have inform'd you that Lady Georgina has elop'd with a Captain Fortescue,

Fortescue, almost on the eve of her marriage with my uncle. His Lordship and Sir Thomas pursued them some miles, when, to the disgrace of Cupid be it spoken, he was seiz'd with so outrageous a fit of the gout as threaten'd his life.—A death-bed extinguish'd love for conscience, and prompted him to make an acknowledgment, very unpleasing to us—viz, of an heir.—A gentleman was sent for, whom he declar'd to be such, and whose pardon he solicited with a vehemence which gave authority to his words. Whether his mind became more easy, or his temper more cool, we know not: but he suddenly mended, and was convey'd by his son back to Mount Herbert. This is the outline of the story, from which you may partly guess at its finishings. My mother's indignation was excessive, on finding the noble blood of the Erskine's, contaminated by a match certainly inferior, if not disgraceful, with

the additional vexation of losing some possessions we had long appropriated ; as my uncle has two very fine English estates, unentail'd, and personal fortune to a considerable amount. His only male heir is Captain Erskine, now at Montpelier, in a decline ; a young man of very bounded capacity, and to whom Lord Melrofs never intended leaving any thing the law allow'd him to with-hold. The son now acknowledg'd, he avows to be a legal one, by a French lady, to whom he was married while ambassador at Versailles, and whom I can remember hearing mention'd as his mistress. Thus situated, you cannot be surpris'd that we regard with jealous eyes, a person by whom we are unexpectedly thrown into a secondary point of view, the more mortifying as we are inform'd that the young man in question, unites the ignorant insolence of low breeding, to that self-sufficiency so sudden an elevation is likely at any rate to produce.

The

The weakness of family pride, however inexcusable it appears to those whose understanding has enabled them perhaps, by turns to look down on the peer and the mechanic, may yet be regarded with a degree of indulgence. Honorary distinctions were originally granted as the rewards of extraordinary merit, and the ideal claim will often be appropriated, even when the real is lost: for tho' to self-examiners, self-commendation is the first proof of their own desert, yet to such as are too superficial for that, the deference paid by those around them is it's substitute. This will be one of my *Scotticisms* with you I dare say: but let it pass. After many conciliatory billets on the part of Lord Melross, Lady Somerset was induc'd, less I believe by those than prudential reasons, to go to Mount Herbert, without Mr. Erskine's cutting it; which was strenuously insisted upon at first. A formal reconciliation took place, and a day of public acknow-

ledgment is to be appointed at Spenser-House, as soon as his Lordship is well enough.

Your whimsical adventure at C—, I do not know yet what to think of: it was certainly very unlike *you*, which is as much as to say, it was not quite right. In fact, one of those starts of *sentimental* benevolence of which it is difficult to define the cause, and if defin'd, I am sorry to say, I fear it would prove entirely feminine. A handsome set of features are but poor securities for a worthy heart, and the best I can do, is to congratulate you on the insanity of your hero: since nothing less could have dictated so wild an answer, or given existence to that charitable gentleman, you so opportunely imagin'd.

The inclos'd from Miss Sutherland, will shew you how she has profited by her release from the Convent; the Countess carries

ries her every where, and she has the high Parisian stamp, to make her the ton whenever she comes over. I am not sorry Sir George has had the good sense to recede from his engagements, tho' I could have wish'd she had given him less cause. My father had a formal letter from him yesterday, in which he explain'd his motives and made his congé, very politely. It is not yettled whether she shall remain in the Convent, or with the Countess, who has press'd the latter: but I rather imagine it will not be granted. I shall use my interest however to gratify her; for the best dependence is but misery, and to lighten it, ought no less to be the happiness than duty of those to whom Heaven has shewn an accidental superiority.

With compliments to Mr. Obrien, (about whom I perfectly agree with you) I remain, as usual, my dear Sophia's.

LETTER XIII.

*To the Right Hon. Lady Helen Spenser—From
Miss Sutherland.*

Paris, Jan.

FOR near two years silence I can make my dear cousin no other apology than my absolute incapacity of writing. The melancholy vigils of a Convent, and the gay ones of a court, equally impede an imagination not too bright at the best, and leave me nothing to offer but affection,—yet why apologize for a silence perhaps never felt? The pleasures of London are too seducing to leave room for the sober ties of relationship, and I half anticipate them in the insipid round which pass here under their names. So true it is that we are ever looking to the future for happiness, that perhaps I was not more impatient to escape the solemn lectures of
sister

sister Angelica, than the flippant gaiety of Madame de Vauricourt. My English constitution no more relishes French gallantry, than those of my countrymen do their food, and I see nothing in either but a mixture of incongruities, neither nourishing or pleasant. Paris may be the paradise of the ordinary, but a handsome woman will feel very little gratification in making one of a circle of goddeffes, created such by their coëffeurs, to whom their willing votaries bow down: and worship the new invented pomade, or panier, with more reverence than they would feel for an animated Venus de Medicis.

The indisposition of the Countess preventing her, Sir George attended me here; and the evening clos'd in with so terrible a storm during our last stage, that I was reduc'd to honor him with a seat in our vehicle.—Here my dear was an opportunity for an insinuating love-tale! (espe-

cially as his face could not mar it) whilst the dear kind soul Thérèse, remembering the golden rule, popt out her officious head, first at one window then at the other: wondering at all without, that she might have the better pretence for being blind to all within; nay sometimes feign'd a gentle slumber; and once I believe was on the verge of a real one till rous'd by me; who having extracted Sir George's snuff-box from his pocket, which lay most invitingly open for the purpose, gently convey'd it to the damsel's fair nostrils; when suddenly drawing up a gale, sufficient to have fill'd the sails of a second armado, she soon felt the force of all-powerful rap-pee—but I defy any muscles to have resisted hers, when with true national politesse, she demanded *mils pardons*, for being half strangled.—But to the more important part of my tale.

A few days after my arrival I was reading in my dressing room, the door half open in expectation of Madame de Vauricourt, when lo ! without any previous notice, enter'd Sir George; toupet as white as the cliffs of Dover, and as perpendicular, or rather bending in a fine curve over his forehead; whilst the little grey eyes sparkled with additional brightness from the shade lousing over them—his mouth forming a fine bay, strongly fortified with a double row of cannon, well mounted, and in excellent repair—I bow'd majestically, and down he sat, upon the very extremity of the chair. A silence most malicious succeeded on my side, and Sir George, you know, has not the luckiest talent in the world at opening a conversation. At length mustering courage—"I have been thinking Madam—and said he with a fidget, I have been *thinking* I say Madam," — — — — —
"Indeed!" cried I, filling up his endless

less pause with a solemn simplicity of countenance,—“ I confess I should not have “ suspected that Sir George,”—he blush’d, look’d silly; and after another fidget, replied with a sort of would-be severity, “ You then judge of others by yourself, Madam.” “ Have a care Sir George!” cried I starting as in terror. “ Of what Madam?” return’d the frighten’d baronet with a fear’d glance all around. “ Oh nothing!—excuse me your toes *do* touch the ground *yet*.” “ Madam!” retorted he with an angry confusion, yet fidgetting so forward at the same time that his chair was in some danger of retreating from him: I took up my knotting and humm’d an air, I suppose faucily, for he was so much irritated, that he snatch’d it from me, and grasping it a moment, threw it on the floor—up I started haughtily enough. “ You are rude Sir George!” “ Did nobody set me the example, Madam?” return’d he with a quivering tone of resentment.

ment. "What I had the insolence to smile? nay I even condescended to be careful of your safety! lovers I always understood were *happy* in the smiles of their mistresses. — Surely then none were ever so blest in their courtships as yourself Sir George." "When your smiles Madam speak the benevolence of *your* heart, they constitute the happiness of mine: when otherwise by debasing you, they render me doubly ridiculous for chusing you." — Tears were in the honest man's eyes; nay a straggler or two made its escape to his cheek, where they hung most poetically tremulous, like rain upon an Islington hollyhock — but was such a period to be borne from one who had never turn'd an antithesis in his life before? I was near being angry, but recovering my temper, "A mighty curious speech! cried I laughing—for *chusing* me! Why do you really imagine you have bought me at some market in Constantinople? Here Fatima! fetch the embroider'd

der'd turban, and order the whiskers.—You are yet indeed I see but a bashaw of *one* tail," lifting by its packthread the Baronet's unfortunate false quëue, which either by being ill fasten'd, or the odd jerks of his odd head, had deserted its post. He snatch'd it from me, and with a hearty execration at his hair-dresser, committed it to the flames. This discovery beat him fairly off the field; and two hours after, with many curious hums and haws, parenthesis within parenthesis, and explanation upon explanation, he gave me to understand with a most rueful countenance, "that his *prudence* had represented to him many *prudential* reasons for not gratifying an *imprudent* passion"—and that, in short, he had written such a letter to my uncle as must effectually put an end to the propos'd union, at the same time that he flatter'd himself he had done me ample justice."—And *that* entre nous, was the only part of his speech, of which I distrusted the veracity

veracity—for melancholy is my chance with Lord and Lady Somerset, if *justice* only has dictated in his representations. I know him however, better than he knows himself; and dare believe I have an advocate in my favor, in one who must be too sensible to fear a rival in the most affectionate of her friends.

J. SUTHERLAND.

P. S. I do not address Miss Vernon, because I have not the same claim to her pardon for not having done it before.—Shall I salute her by the name of Obrien, on my return? Or am I already to do it? Happy independency! which allows her to determine her own fate—yet do I not envy her the man, proud, self-sufficient coxcomb! How I long to laugh at him!

L E T.

LETTER XIV.

*To the Hon. Henry Herbert Erskine, Mount-
Herbert.—From Mr. O'Brien.*

St. James's-Street, Jan.

YOUR *letter my dear Friend, I re-
ceiv'd with that lively sense of plea-
sure I shall always feel in whatever condu-
ces to your good fortune, and for the first
time in my life began to think conscience
not quite so troublesome a guest—in others;
as some author, says of sincerity: Your
invitation I thank you for: but prythee
didst thou take me for Socrates? And
think I should have philosophy enough
to exclaim at sight of thy splendor,
“how many things are here I do not
want!” Think me at least a more po-
lish'd Athenian; and tho', like his disci-
ple

ple, I can upon occasion sup up my black broth without making even a wry face, my palate is as dainty as another's, and has as luxurious a taste, as if kind fortune had blest *me* with a title. What! come with a formal phyzz, to mingle with a starched set of antiquated courtiers and wither'd beldams, who upon the presumption of a coronet, shall repress the spirit of five and twenty; and plunge youth, health and vigor, into their own chearless inactivity? No! no! Harry Herbert, any thing but Erskine, and I am yours. But my horses dont understand the *grand pas*, and my face wants the improvement of a century at least. Jestng apart however, take the portraits of one half of the party at your intended introductory meeting, and then tell me whether my presence will afford either them or myself pleasure. Lord Somerset! A well-meaning blockhead, who has no fault but that of fancying himself as great as the premier; and fatiguing you with se-
cond

cond hand politics under the notion of profound confidence and secrecy. Lady Somerfet! a rank Scotchwoman! proud as Lucifer after he fell, and with as little cause; yet with as much meanness as is usually the companion of such pride: one who calls compliance with the world, knowledge of it, and takes advantage of every thing that passes around her, tho' she is not keen enough to foresee any. Lord Spenfer as good a jockey as Newmarket can afford; with an odd compound of the fool and the coxcomb in him: yet (like his father) not without gleams of understanding. Lady Helen! tho' the essence of the family yet as odd as the rest, but with that captivating something, no one knows how to resist: brought up by her mother-in-law, from the persuasion she should have children of her own, in total obscurity, the graces of her mind and person had free scope to expand. Lady Somerfet at length convinc'd of her error, and sensible how highly

ly

ly such beauty might ennoble the family, polish'd it with every studied elegance of good breeding, and she was introduc'd at Court on her eighteenth birth-day, with an eclat that has thrown an unconquerable softness and timidity over her manners. She is, you will confess when you see her, most truly the beauty of nature—dress, consequence and splendor, seem to add nothing to her. If she was not delicately form'd, you would call her under-siz'd, she has exquisite gentility, rather than elegance; and a smiling sweetness of features, that seems repress'd only by modesty: soft retiring eyes, in which all the purity of her mind is collected, and a luxuriance of auburn hair. A whimsical court beauty! with whom diamonds seem incongruous, and whom powder half disguises: her parents have made her such; but it is a character she cannot long support, unless she derives variety from the display of her natural one. Tho' not dazzled

zled by splendor, her faculties are repress'd by it; nor is there perhaps, in the circle of St. James's, a disposition less known. Those gentle features are but veils to a mind, full of Lady Somerset's haughtiness where she dislikes, but with ten times her understanding. Sanguine, impassion'd,—keen even to a degree of the sarcastic, she pierces into every character, whilst apparently inattentive to all. Internally conscious of beauty, pride and good-sense struggle with the weakness of her sex, and not having power to make her condemn the flattery, frequently transfer the disdain to the flatterer. To this fair damsel you are not ignorant of my devoirs, the tantalizing gipsy neither accepted or declin'd them, and I had too much wit to come to a positive declaration. Certain it is she lik'd me well enough to admit me to a familiarity that enabled me to develop her real character, and I her enough to think of play-
ing

ing the solemn fool, in other words, the matrimonial one; which would just have been marring her fortune, without making my own. Lady Somerset fav'd us an eclairsissement, by one more diverting, and a strain'd civility has subsisted between us, ever since her Ladyship made the unlucky discovery, that she was neither so young or so handsome as her daughter-in-law.

Curiosity however to see so whimsical a group, will I believe bring me on Thursday. I shall dress at the Bull, should you therefore have a leisure half-hour before that of my visit, you know where to find me—in the interim, if you are disposed to deposit me finally with my ancestors, you have only to inclose such another sermon of Sir George's as the last. It will be necessary however to secure post-horses, for should the coroner's inquest command my head to be open'd, ten to
 one

one but they find it lying in some odd corner of my brain, (and it must be an odd one where my brains lie) like so much laudanum. 'Sdeath Herbert! what a wretched figure would the handsomest fellow upon earth make, when the coarse paw of a dissector prepares him for a glass-case! —'tis a vile thought, so adieu to it! and let the gentle hand of a friseur, adorn mine in a stile fitter for Sir Joshua, or the more elegant inclosure of shagreen.

Farewell,

G. OBRIEN.

P. S. Irwin's letter I return. Happy Sir George, to have amass'd such a fund of sagacity before *five and thirty*. How malicious is time to have written *fifty* in most legible wrinkles, on a countenance where twenty never bestow'd a grace!

How

How tenderly too, do we allow for the follies of others, where they chance to refer to our own! the good Baronet, I doubt not, thinks it a much more excusable error to *purchase* at his age, the legal favors of beauty, than accept them at mine on the more liberal claims of nature. I had forgot that perhaps, he did not think it necessary to tell you, he quitted England, (where no doubt his rhetoric, as he most pompously insinuates, would have done wonders between you and Lord Melrofs,) on the more important business of marrying a girl of eighteen. O tempore! O mores!—These are our modern fages!

L E T T E R XV.

*To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen
Spenser.*

Stanton-Audley, Feb.

IF my dear Sophia, like some of our modern scholars, you do not scorn to remember so insignificant a person in the literary world as our old friend Æsop, you will perhaps, recollect the fable of the boy and the bull. I have feign'd terror so long that I fear I shall ever be suspected, and yet nothing is more certain, than that I am in imminent danger, and, without your assistance, must perforce, tumble headlong into that gulf which is more impassable than the Styx. Oh Hymen! Hymen! how are thy sacred rights profan'd! we have converted thy saffron robe into one of parchment, and exchange'd thy myrtles for elms and oaks.

Our

Our visit was conducted with all due solemnity. My mother's hair whiter than the Alps, with like them as I have been told, occasional spots abounding in all the beauties of Flora. Of my father's head, I say nothing: but of honest Vaughan's, who for the greater state, was mingled in our train, I *may* venture to observe, that if you can imagine a fresh well powder'd wig popt upon an old dusty bust, it will afford you a very competent idea of it. My brother, carelessly degagé, as certain, even at his worst, of eclipsing his new relation. As to myself, who shall paint to you the length of my train? Over which I already maliciously enjoy'd the various stumblings, recoveries and aukward apologies of my destin'd Lord, for such our new relation I found was to be. My hair so lightly and elegantly dress'd, it seem'd scarce able to support the feathers that play'd over it; eyes lighted up with all the dignity of conscious rank; a complexion illumin'd with

vanity and hope; and thus *all* flutter, *all* pomp, did we alight at Mount Herbert: there, whilst sweeping towards the drawing room, an accidental glance shew'd me a door half open, thro' which a perspective presented itself of two gay, agreeable, elegantly drest men, who were indolently leaning against the billiard table. Oh! the involuntary impulse by which every woman collects her air, and animates every feature, at sight of a pretty fellow! did I tread *too* gently think you? Or was I sorry when a chance look discover'd to me the features of Obrien in one? Or when throwing open the door, he alarm'd his companion, who captivated me with a bow so seducingly respectful, seconded by a countenance where corrected vivacity gave such charms to softness, that even the fau-cy Obrien, had about as much share in my curtsy as if still in Pall-Mall. The air, the manner, the society of the unknown,

known, proclaim'd him the gentleman, and his undress left me no doubt of the relation. Honest Thomas! Didst thou think me blind, when after thou hadst open'd the door of the drawing-room a quarter of an hour, I discover'd I was to enter it? Or following thee along the well known gallery, seem'd as much at a loss as if tracing the course of the Nile. Surprise, confusion, a half mixture of pleasure, and a strong one of uncertainty concerning my behaviour, left me for awhile only the awkward spectator of the compliments paid Lord Melrofs, on his recovery. But alas! what havock had that cruel invader of the spirit, lightness and agility of threescore, made in my poor uncle. Disappointment sat in wrinkles on every feature. The scatter'd locks, rebellious to the hand of the valet, and indeed no longer adorn'd for conquest, retain'd the impress of the night-cap; and cruel Cupid, not content

F 3

with

with the devastation in his heart, had still maliciously left him maim'd in the toe;—one solitary leg dangled to the ground, whilst the other remain'd supported by an immense cargo of cushions and crimson velvet. The first ceremonies past, his Lordship apologiz'd with great solemnity for the absence of his son; whom he assured us he had but the moment before dispatch'd to turn over some parliamentary debates. I could indeed have inform'd him how deep the young gentleman was in them, had he not instantly appear'd.—The same engaging air of good-breeding and respect was now only temper'd with a less distant address. A happy dignity, compounded of person and mind, left not one doubt even in the most arrogant of the company, of the manner in which they should receive him. Every one stood suspended, and tacitly allow'd a rank from which tho' fortune might exclude, she could never degrade him. Oh! my dear,
how

how insignificant are half the human race, compar'd with what they ought to be. That superiority, all felt without acknowledging, struck me with a degree of contempt, I could hardly repress. Fashion made me the little idol, and of course the better judge; the half whispers, unmeaning ogles, and more unmeaning compliments, with which I was surrounded, inclin'd me to break silence, by such a lecture as few of them had ever heard. Mr. Erskine, alone paid my heart the compliment of not offending my understanding; and whilst his eyes told me I was a handsome woman, his conversation prov'd he thought me a sensible one. Yet our assembly in the afternoon was brilliant, and many of our gentlemen of the first rank. But consequence, consequence my dear Sophia, is unknown, or lost, in the present age. A buckram hero, who looks like little better than his own trophy, is my aversion: but

an overgrown petit maitre, is such a satire upon all they can advance in favor of their own dignity, as cannot be equall'd. No flow of words, no nervous turn of thinking, they are mere olives in mind as well as complexion, passable enough in a cluster, but absolutely insipid and disgusting singly. Our evening was as dull as cards and scandal could make it: yet I was vex'd to the heart at the pointed manner in which I was singled out to Mr. Erskine, whose gallantry, (Oh! how unworthy a word!) whose delicacy let me say, left it not in their power to compel attentions, I trembled to receive. O'Brien gave me the highest character of him; do not however deceive yourself! it was *O'Brien-like*, he allow'd him ease, gaiety, spirit, vivacity to every degree but vice, unbounded goodnature and courage, in short, all those dazzling qualities which make and destroy the happiness of the opposite sex; his person he spoke lightest of; tho' entre nous

nous, he has no contemptible opinion of one not a tenth part as handsome. But what pretty fellow can do justice to another! To shorten my tale, at midnight we departed; when the manliest, handsomest hand, that ever yet clasp'd that of a fair lady, was ready to receive mine, and conducted me to the carriage, as Richardson says, "with a grace all his own."

The satisfaction of my parents during my return, overwhelm'd me with regret and chagrin; *that* told me more forcibly than any language, the difficulties I should have to encounter, in declining a match so highly desirable. Even my brother has no interest to counteract it; nor can I make him one: since it is probable, Lord Melrofs will resign all other claims but those upon my little estate of Mulbery-Mount: by which means the provision for younger children, would return to Spenser, who I am sure would be glad of it—for none are so covetous as.

the prodigal. You my dear Sophia, are my only hope; your heart is disengag'd; if my cousin answers the first impressi^on, you cannot make a more deserving choice. Your rank, fortune, person, all tell me you are a rival, too powerful for my family to contend with; and as for O'Brien, believe me he is no match for you. In matrimony, mental advantages should be at least equal, and with all his accomplishments he will fall far short of yourself; in a word, he is an agreeable hair-brain, who with a great deal of shrewdness, draws no other observation from it than that of the moment. To such a man, the light and elegant vivacity which springs at once from reflection and discernment, would in a little time be an object of wonder and envy.—Miss Sutherland appears to me a character so much more congenial, that I have often wonder'd at their jars; but as love has sometimes no surer root than those, I am
not

not at all convinc'd that time; and the restraints of maturer years, may not unite their tempers and affections. Her birth entitles her to such a match, and in Ireland they would doubtless hold a distinguish'd rank; as Sir William Nugent, his uncle, is our minister's right hand. Lord Melrofs in despite of the gout, goes to town next week to see his son presented, We are to give a splendid entertainment on the occasion, a few days after. Can you resolve to oblige me by being present, if I send you a card? Only answer it and leave me to manage the matter with Lady Somerset. If she frowns, her quarrel is with nature; and your heart may pardon her in acknowledgment of the tribute to your vanity.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XVI.

*To the Hon. Henry Herbert Erskine—From
Mr. Obrien.*

St. James's-Street.

IF a peevish old fellow, and wither'd
hag, who envy thee every advantage,
and see nothing in thy joys but distorted
images of those they have never done re-
gretting, be acquisitions, I congratulate
thee! Oh Herbert! such a visit! methinks I
still see the antiquated coxcombs smile sneer-
ingly upon thee, and hate thee for daring
to be their superior. The women indeed
were more gracious, and could have for-
given thy being young, on the modest con-
dition of thy forgetting they were old.—
Nay, these antiques are not content with
being the torments of their coevals; the
stare of dullness lives to future generati-
ons: and the faithful canvass, transmits the
melancholy

melancholy history of decrepitude and decay, to succeeding ages. How often has a shallow-pated coxcomb led me thro' a gallery of foolish faces, only to afford me the unnecessary conviction, that his own was the essence of all! Let these human caterpillars, whilst sluggishly wantoning in the dounties of nature, believe thee no less a grub than themselves! but let friendship strip thee of the tinsel of ancestry, and, like the gallant spirited Savage, admire thee more for wanting it. Prythee Herbert, no sober faces! I loathe constraint; and tho' I honor virtue, hate the farce of it. Lord Melrofs it is true is thy father, but shouldst thou tell me, thou couldst assume affection, as easily as a coronet, I would forswear thee for the honest fellow I had hitherto lov'd, and leave thee to the worthy society of thy granáms.

Lady Helen indeed, shone a little Venus amidst the group, and flatter'd you by a distinction

distinction she rarely shews any one. Let us fairly tie up together friend, and take this last frolic, as we have many others in company. If it turns out well, we will humour the girls, and admire our own sagacity: if otherwise, e'en rail at the sex, and have the pleasure of going to logger-heads with each other, instead of ourselves, for being inveigled by them. The name of my fair one, I believe I told you long since is Vernon; a most adorable girl, but an errant coquette: one whose greatest charm lies in uniting the faults of her whole race, and who never saw the man she did not wish to enslave, with that soft and winning simplicity of manner which makes us run into the snare with our eyes open. That she is mine, I do from my soul believe. Mine, by the most flattering ties: love, doubt, caprice, every thing woman can feel, or man inspire. Yet does the gipsy still pretend to make a secret

cret

cret of it, lest the acknowledgment of a triumph, should lessen the number of her captives. The house however is taken, and all the paraphernalia of bridal finery in preparation, tho' slowly. I have also bought Digby's little Villa near Richmond, as a cot to retire to this summer; tho' faith! my remittances come so irregularly from the poor devils in Ireland, that I hardly know where to find the purchase money, unless my goddess condescends to pay for her own whims.

If you come up to town next week, as propos'd, you shall call with me in Pall-Mall, and be the better able to judge of my choice. As the devoted of Lady Helen, you will be doubly welcome to Miss Vernon; for they are very miracles of female friendship. How welcome your society will be to me, I need not add: professions are unworthy of either of us. And tho' I cannot with the eloquent pomposity

posity of Sir George, dictate what you *should* do, yet if to defend what you have done, and give you credit for what you intend, be a merit, you will find me as ready to draw a trigger in your cause, as any fool of seven and twenty. Take me however as you see me. Follies I have: but don't intend a priggish fellow should claim a merit for informing me of them. I long ago settled my conscience in the following manner; viz. That I am too young not to want advice, and too old to pursue it. Therefore till I am nearer one period or the other, must beg leave to remain just what I am, and that is,

Sincerely Yours,

GEORGE OBRIEN.

P. S. Let me see you as soon as you arrive: I would anticipate the world by introducing you myself to Miss Vernon.— But remember my complaisance is a tax upon your honor.

L E T--

LETTER XVII.

To Lady Helen Spenser—From Miss Vernon.

Pall Mall,

TO the whimsical propofal of my friend what answer can be given? Made as it is fo seriously too. If we are hurt at parents when they difpofe of hands, without the knowledge of their children, what is to be faid of thofe who affume fo arbitrary a power over hearts? I fhould be forry methinks, to impute my affection for you to impulse, and yet when I find it extend to a branch of your family fo lately found, and fo little known, as Mr. Erskine, I believe I muft grant my understanding the credit of fuch an excufe.—Your letter was but a fecond motive of prepossession in his favor; for a few mornings after Mr. Obrien's return from Mount Herbert, he introduc'd in the fon of
Lord

Lord Melross, that unknown and unfortunate young man, who had been so much the object of my curiosity and concern. My disconcerted air alone must have recall'd my features to his memory, for after a moment of mutual surprise, with enliven'd eyes and accent, he dispens'd with the offer'd ceremony; telling Mr. O'Brien, "that my own benevolence had already been his most distinguishing introduction." I believe he would not have said this; a glance declar'd at once the doubt and the resolution; but he saw I was embarrass'd, and that, since concealment was impossible, whatever was said ought to be immediate. I know not what answer I return'd: something of my being only the instrument of the benevolence he honor'd by recollecting. I am sure he did not believe me; I saw it in every feature; but I saw at the same moment, a deference so flattering, so self-conciliating, that I could scarce regret his guessing that he was indebted to
my

my own discernment, for a generosity I am not certain I should have been pleas'd at his imputing to another. Mr. O'Brien said, (oddly enough! for how should he so immediately conceive the circumstance?) that to be unhappy was always a sufficient claim on my heart; to which, Mr. Erskine politely added, that "it was one half his sex might plead when they had seen me." Ah! my dear Lady Helen, why do you accuse the frankest temper in the world of insincerity? I own to you I was more pleas'd with every trifling compliment from your cousin, than reason can justify or partiality excuse. That elegant affability in his manners which throws a dignity over every person and every thing, contrasted with the levity of Mr. O'Brien, sunk the latter too much in my eyes—he never appear'd so insipid, so familiar, in a word, so unpleasing. Yet it is not that Mr. Erskine wants gaiety; but he discriminates character;

character; nor idly, like his friend, absorbs all in the lightness of his own. He did not confine his acknowledgments to the moment of addressing me, but as O'Brien had invited himself to be our escorte round the Park, Mr. Erskine did us the honor of accompanying him. We had however, little conversation, as the gentlemen were on horse-back; yet I thought the reserve of the one, increas'd with the gaiety of the other; and I was either dispos'd to be captious or Mr. O'Brien never appear'd to less advantage; in short, he was quite disagreeable. Mrs. Davenport's relationship having authoriz'd her employing him, he is now eternally officious about our furniture, and never chose a worse time to be minute on the orders he had given. Am I not mistress of myself, my dear? but there are a set of people in the world who having got a small insight into your affairs, always do you the favor of supposing you know not how to conduct them.

In

In the evening I had a note from Sir James, on the subject of his obliging interference between me and my mother's family; Lord Almerstone is indispos'd, and his Lady consequently much distressed; their wishes however still unite with mine for a reconciliation, which is only delay'd till his Lordship's recovery. I take much pleasure in the hope of recovering those natural ties which give so great a charm to life. The conduct of the late Lord to my mother, being equally inexcusable either as a brother or a man, was an effectual bar between us: but to extend resentment to so distant a branch as now fills the title, would be a folly. When I feel within myself the absolute necessity for such connections, I scarce wonder that those unfortunate beings, whose birth precludes them from every claim of nature, are generally victims to vice. Sweet claims which warm and purify the heart! which teach it to value affection, and to deserve it.—

Excluded

Excluded from them it becomes one vast void; its feelings ungratified, and its principles unsupported. Those very feelings lead to excess, and without knowing the guiding impulse, such solitary individuals seek in a course of irregular pleasures, the happiness, which had they been born in the quiet circle of domestic life, they would perhaps have found existed only there. The sensibility of youth is so rapid and so swelling that it requires a thousand little currents to divert its force.— Mine was often a source of pain to me, before custom familiariz'd me to the common intercourse of life. It was perpetually striving to discover the same in others; it sought for friends where it found only acquaintance; alternately expanding and contracting without tasting the sweets of society, or the soft enthusiasm of congenial affections.

I return you Miss Sutherland's letter, with thanks for her obliging enquiries.—She has, a most agreeable levity; yet whilst there is a Lady Helen in the world, Miss Sutherland must pardon me if I regard her but in a secondary point of view.—A warm heart and a gentle temper, are the compounds which alone produce perfection; thro' the mild channel of the latter, every emotion of the former comes purified and calm'd; the passions wear the robe of the graces, and therefore appear doubly amiable. Nor should I so highly esteem even my best beloved friend, if I did not believe the sweetness of her disposition would perpetually temper the keenness of her understanding, and thus breathe over it that feminine softness, by which alone we can be truly charming.

Yours ever.

S. V.

P. S.

P. S. Will you pardon me for not attending you on the day fix'd? Whether Lady Somerfet's motive is, or is not, of the flattering nature you mention, if she wishes to exclude me from her parties, surely neither you nor I, are entitled to cross her. I sincerely acquit her of any dislike to me, but both pride and delicacy forbid my intrusion.

L E T.

LETTER XVIII.

To George Obrien, Esq—From Mr. Erskine.

Mount Herbert, Feb.

THE abruptness of my departure, dear George, is its own apology, as it proves it was not voluntary: tho', to say truth, the pomp of ceremonious introductions is so insipid, that I am not sorry to quit the field, and let the rest of the world take me upon report. We have been constant guests at Stanton-Audley; to morrow we become inmates there for a few days: but tho' allow'd every opportunity I am unable to enter into the character of Lady Helen, or discover a trace of that distinction you so clearly perceiv'd. That she treats me with politeness is true: but it is a politeness that shrinks from a return, and represses my attentions while it demands my respect. In short, whether

pride or the coldness of her heart is the cause, it is certain mine does not acknowledge her with ardor, and, to deal openly with you, finds another image, infinitely nearer it than her's. You were a witness of the surprise, the pleasure I felt, in discovering the suppos'd Lady Georgina, to be Miss Vernon. Oh George! with what calmness do you mention your union with that charming girl! and what are the titles, the graces of Lady Helen, when compar'd with those eyes whose every glance beams mind, and that cheek whose varying vermillion seems but it's rich essence, warm from the heart. I own to you I was delighted, fascinated with her; *so* fascinated, that like half the fools of my sex I could bow down to the ideal goddess, and create her as many virtues as she has charms.— Yet did I so well confine my admiration, as to deny her vanity even the power of wounding you; and, to convince you I have

have not plung'd too deeply, had moderation enough in my ardors to remember rather what you had to lose than what I could gain. Yet I was not blind to the Spaniard-like glances you cast at me. By my faith! Obrien, thou art an errant Quixote at heart, but that modern chivalry, is quite the reverse of the ancient; for where one fellow tilted with you for not thinking his mistress handsome, a dozen will be ready to do it now for the opposite reason.

On my return to Lady Helen, (after we had been to Pall-Mall) I compos'd my features to a fashionable stoicism, and gravely told her, I had the honor of being introduc'd to Miss Vernon; a pretty female trepidation instantly disarrang'd the smiles and graces, whilst with all the bloomy eagerness of conscious beauty, she ask'd me whether, "I did not think her very handsome?" This happens to be one

of those many questions which I have ever consider'd in the mouth of a pretty woman as an indirect way of desiring a flat contradiction : and as one vice is quite as natural to our sex, as the other can possibly be to theirs, I had forsworn my conscience before I found out I had answer'd her question. I am not sure she was pleas'd, and I believe each was just hypocrite enough to let the other see they intended to be such.

The world, I suppose has already inform'd you, that the cause of my father's precipitate retreat, was the sudden return of the Captain and Lady Georgina. How hard is it to laugh at ourselves!—with sense to feel ridiculous, he has not enough to make the confession; and invites the very derision he would avoid; for as to love, I believe he has as little remaining, as if her Ladyship had done him the favor she went four hundred miles
to

to shun. How severe too the justice, which ever renders the votaries of the world it's victims! and doubles the acuteness of mortification, whilst it deadens the powers of enjoyment. Beware, my dear Obrien, of the dangerous delusion! of all sciences I have ever consider'd knowledge of the world as the least desirable. It is bartering our purest pleasures for a name: we laugh ourselves into it; but the last smile it extorts is the grave of our happiness.

Adieu,

H. H. ERSKINE.

IN CONTINUATION.

My packet not being dispatch'd, I give you the little history of the day—a preface no ways calculated to improve it—

but novelty, my friend, can give amusement to high life, and the bows of a senator may sometimes be as diverting as the whims of an oxonian. To rescue however my epistle, and your eyes, I must tell you I have discovered a mystery: Lady Helen, the timid, the reserv'd Lady Helen; has a lover: and, what is really ludicrous, without being the object in question, I am the only one to whom it is ascertain'd.

On our return from a walk round the Terrace, we turn'd into a small garden parlor, in which hangs a picture of Lady Helen, and behind it, whilst she was carelessly running over the keys of the harpsichord, my father's indefatigable eyes spied a card, to which he awaken'd our attention by some very pointed smiles that pass'd between him and Lord Somerset on the reading. I rather enquir'd the jest from good manners than curiosity; (for the

the mirth of half the world is but a tax
levied upon the muscles of their neighbors)
and with some difficulty, had the cause
of it put in my hand, where I read the
following lines ;

In ancient times, to prove her skill,
Dame Nature, Helen drew ;
But found that faster than she wrought,
The fatal beauty flew.

More equally each future age
Enjoy'd the matron's care,
And many roll'd away,—nor saw
A Helen half so fair.

Her error prov'd at length by time,
The long fav'd dust she chose,
And giving it an angel's mind,
The second Helen rose.

“ Oh ! had I finish'd, thus the Fair
Of ruin'd Greece,” she said,
“ Her virtues would have reconcil'd,
The foes her beauty made.”

One singularity occur'd in the above—the hand was so extremely like my own, that a keen eye could scarce discover the difference: and I was crown'd with more laurels than Waller, before I had time to disavow my title to them. Poetry and Women, are the Scylla and Charybdis of my father; on either of which, his reason is sure to be wreck'd: and I believe he never thought me so much his son, as when I began to think myself least so.— One glance of Lady Helen however discover'd to me that *she* had a truer monitor within; and I perceiv'd a glow of terror and surprise give that lustre of sensibility to her charms, which never fails to double them. Satisfied with regard to her, I was not at the trouble of confuting the charge further; and bought reputation at the small expence of silence. Adieu! however to tranquillity in the fair bosom of Lady Helen: she is no longer the same being. A tremor seizes her whole frame
if

if I approach; her cheek is mantled, and the soft lid seems even to oppress her eye. To speak upon the subject, would be perhaps to seek a confidence dangerous to me, and useless to her. Ill confirm'd in the affections of my father, it is yet too early to think of mingling in the affairs of his family; and an *anonymous* lover cannot be an equal. Thus circumscrib'd, of all my active faculties, curiosity alone is free, and time must be it's gratifier. Once more Adieu!—apropos, you have seen Miss Sutherland.—What think you of the enclos'd? We are neither of us spar'd in it: but I am not sure whether *you* will plead guilty or no.

H. E.

L E T T E R XIX.

*To the Hon. Henry Herbert Erskine—From
Sir George Irwin*

My Dear Herbert,

Paris, Feb.

I should rather have suppos'd friendship would have curtail'd ceremony than given place to it: since out of the number of those to whom you devoted the time you would not allow for writing to me, there was not perhaps one who enter'd so warmly into your concerns. I know your heart; but the warmth of intention is apt to mislead young people from real action, and I find has induc'd you to satisfy yourself with a resolution of shewing some *public* proof of gratitude, for with-holding from me the simple and true one of private confidence. Sir James Meadows wrote me the particulars you omitted. I heartily congratulate

congratulate you, on the acquirement of a rank you have it in your power to adorn: and shall add nothing, but that I hope for your own sake, you will not set too great a value upon it; since whenever you begin to think it your first advantage, others will find it your only one.

Your intended alliance with Lady Helen, will, if it ever takes place, conduce no doubt to your happiness; she is a sweet and modest young creature, very ill calculated for the engine of her mother-in-law's ambition; with just that understanding, with which a prudent man may be content; but nature reserv'd shining talents for her cousin, whom you have not yet seen. This young lady is the daughter of Lady Somerset's only sister, by a Scots ensign of the name of Sutherland. He was kill'd during the last war, leaving a child totally unprovided for, as his wife

did not survive the birth. A sentiment of national pride, I believe induc'd Lady Somerset to adopt, and give her her own name; but finding two beauties *unsaleable* at once, the one of them is dispatch'd by the noble Earl to a convent, till the other is dispos'd of.

Miss Sutherland is now twenty; her features are not so small and delicate as Lady Helen's, nor yet with the madona cast of their mutual friend, Miss Vernon. Her eyes bright, languishing, and dark; her complexion palely transparent, where the carnation is ever mounting, without gaining too much strength; her nose a delicate aquiline; and round her lips, ever half dissolving into a smile, a thousand light and seducing dimples continually play, without our ever being able to trace a fix'd one. To these graces of person, she unites a mind capable of every excellence;

a poignant understanding, and an expression of it but too lively. My desire of seeing this lovely girl independent of her relations, led me to an offer you may perhaps have heard of: and should Lady Helen not accord with the wishes of her family, you cannot do better than turn your eyes to her cousin, and atone for the malice of her fortune, by a proper regard for her merit; assur'd that you should, on any occasion of that nature, command more than my heart.

Obrien, I think shew'd you no great kindness in not visiting you at C—. How you young men settle these matters, I know not: it appears to me, as if you mutually gave and took the privilege of setting aside friendship, for a mistress, a dice-box and a bottle; since it was one of those important concerns I dont doubt, that took up his time. Do you value your friend

friend as you do your mirror, only for shewing a likeness of yourself? If you do, pray dont chuse one which deforms you! In expectation of a longer letter than your last,* I remain

Your sincere Friend,

G. IRWIN.

*Omitted.

L E T.

LETTER XX.

To Lady Helen Spenser—From Miss Vernon.

Pall-Mall, Feb.

THE uneasy and alarming state both of your health and mind when you left town, has fill'd me with a thousand apprehensions; and I can scarce pardon Lady Georgina, for being the cause of my losing you at the only period of my life, when I had flatter'd myself my sympathy might have been of service. You *have* then a secret—a secret which preys upon your heart, and to which mine is a stranger—which even undermines your constitution; surrounded with all the luxuries of life, alas! what fatality is it that secretly embitters humanity, nor suffers one pleasure to blossom, whose fading odors do not ach upon the sense. Could I form any object of particular attachment even
in

in fancy, I should not hesitate for the source of your anxiety; but whatever limits I assign it, I am still at a loss; and find myself reduc'd to the mortifying necessity of supposing I have been deficient, either in feeling or observation.

Mr. Davenport (who follows his sister to Ireland in a few weeks) made me to-day a proposal of resuming the agreement enter'd into during my minority, which invested his father with the use of my fortune, on my receiving the income. These terms adopted from a grateful sense of the favors conferr'd on *my* family, were certainly highly advantageous to his; as they put it even out of my own power to withdraw the principal, but from the death of one party, or the consent of both. The bond now cancell'd by the decease of the old gentleman, and my coming of age, his son wish'd to renew, upon interest much beyond the former; and the prodigious

digious credit of the house could certainly leave me only one objection. A change of state might however render a personal and immediate property every way more desirable than an income solely settled on myself; I therefore declin'd a decision, tho' for very obvious reasons, I dare not consult with the only person capable of advising me—I mean Obrien.

There is somewhat ludicrous enough in the chagrin you express'd at finding Mr. Erskine not so *struck* with me as you expected: how many mortifications of this nature have we I fear to endure!—Perhaps it is the chief misfortune of youthful friendships, that each party inspires the other with a fantastic idea of lighting the same ardor in every bosom as in the chosen one, and finding every mind equally at leisure to examine and admire it's perfections. Half the human race are past
over

over, like the flowers of the field, which, however perfect, we never view near enough to discover the tints. That I should have been pleas'd to find he returned the distinction he secretly receiv'd, I will not deny: but weak indeed should I be, my dear, could I suffer it to dwell longer on my mind, than is sufficient to humble vanity, and repress expectation. To one secret only are my eyes entirely open'd; and, I perceive with a degree of regret, that Mr. Obrien was never more to me than a friend; the petulancy I inwardly felt at his attentions, the distaste I conceiv'd for his person, a thousand trifles betray'd me to myself, and I fear, have deeply wounded him. I think I can perceive a chagrin'd heart under his smiles; unwilling to be convinc'd of my indifference, and unable to resent it. Far, far as his falls short of the elevated and shining capacity, which adds the irresistible to the winning

winning, and dignifies the ideal portraits of the heart, he is too estimable not to be regarded with the sincerest respect;— and I know not if I could pardon myself for rendering him unhappy.

Farewell.

S. VERNON.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

To George Obrien, Esq.—From Mr. Erskine.

Mount Herbert, Feb.

I Think I once before observ'd that most men write rather to please themselves than their correspondents; what others read for, is a secret I leave you to discover; as I perceive you are fully determin'd I shall be no judge. Now ought I to be dumb, in punishment for your silence, and leave you to find out both poet and lover at your leisure: thanks however to indolence and the country, I return to my old employment, and having no faithful squire to do it for me, most soberly take upon myself the history of my own exploits.—How happy is it George, that the indolence of age counteracts its discernment! what tender swain would dare to offer a billet doux, or what timid nymph to receive

ceive one, did the same active fire that taught *them* a sympathetic knowledge of each others sentiments, pervade those around? Four and fifty may be deceiv'd; but four and twenty is an argus that may defy all the powers of intrigue.

The veil that conceal'd it withdrawn, I had every day new opportunities of perceiving the true character of Lady Helen: to please is the triumph of her person, but to charm, was left the prerogative of her mind. The understanding which shrunk beneath a first enquiry, expanded by every succeeding one. Opprest with the hauteur of her mother-in-law, the frivolousness of her father, and the boorishness of Lord Spenser, her mind contracts its excellencies to her heart, and to judge of the one, we must touch the other. From the moment I became a sort of acknowledg'd acquaintance of the latter, I perceiv'd with pleasure that she grew solicitous of my esteem, and attentive

tive to my cares. Her politeness was no longer a vague or cold acknowledgment of mine, it was deference, it was distinction. She still however trembled at my voice, and blush'd beneath my eye; the picture, or the poetry, were never alluded to without exciting a tremor, and I found myself too powerfully impell'd by curiosity, not to hazard a discovery of the cause of her emotion, however the consequences of it might involve me. Indisposition had confin'd her to her own apartment two days, when Lord Somerset, meeting me on the stairs, as he was going there, sans ceremonie, bid me come with him. Inclination urg'd me to consent, but as *I* was not her father, etiquette slept in with a few fine speeches, which he paid no attention to, and I obey'd his summons. She was in a sweet undress, so happily suited to the unusual paleness of her complexion, that I thought her never half so lovely; for in truth, had she not been an Earl's daughter, she had been only

only a very pretty woman : tho' that, and the power of a title, have made her a goddess in the eyes of the world. Our entrance extremely discompos'd her. Lord Somerset had not I found even warn'd her of his own visit, much less mine ; and I was under the necessity of apologizing with an air of gallantry, that rather added to her perturbation. The old peer, who by the strain in which I began to excuse his blunder, conceiv'd it a very ingenious thing, determin'd to take a hint, and almost as abruptly as he had enter'd, departed : an event of which the alteration in her countenance first inform'd me. To relieve her, I continued to engross the conversation on a thousand idle topics, not without perceiving her eye continually turn towards a book which lay before her ; and her mind teem with projects to effect a concealment, which might have been accomplish'd by one careless action. Tho' convinc'd

convinc'd of a mystery, I had too much prudence to shew I even suspected one, and leading the discourse towards poetry, rallied her on the verses and the lover who had adopted so certain a means of distinguishing himself; she pleaded ignorance:—attempted to rally in return, and was come to an absolute denial of all knowledge of the writing; when I open'd, as if by chance, the book which lay before me, and saw in the title page, the name of, “*Edward Nugent*,” in a hand exactly similar—I raised my eye with precipitation to her’s—I did not need to do more. A confutation at once so simple, and so strong, overpowered her spirits, and after a thousand tremulous agitations, she burst into tears.

“To distress you my dearest Lady Helen,” said I tenderly seizing her hand, “shocks me. Curiosity, doubt, allow me to add, anxiety, have induc’d me to do it: but if the service of my life can be an expiation,

piation, command it!" Oh George! she had too much of the woman, too much of the soft, the winning weakness of her sex in her, to be so easily sooth'd. I had touch'd every tender chord of *her* heart, and, faith, she went very near touching every tender one of mine, whilst she leant with unconscious helplessness upon my shoulder. At length, as if sensible of an indignity her mind labour'd to repel, emotion a little subsided, and turning her face from me, she imperfectly articulated, "we are married!"—Astonish'd, petrified as I was at a discovery so far surpassing my wildest guesses, it yet shew'd me at a glance, all the delicacy of a heart, which in the extremest moment of perturbation, was alive to decorum.

"May you then be as happy as you merit most charming of women!" cried I, with an ardor I could not repress. "Incompatible as such an event must prove

with the felicity of every man who knows you, he cannot deserve the name who wishes you otherwise. My heart already aspires to make acquaintance with *that* you have distinguish'd, and to prove itself worthy of an esteem, it will be the first blessing of my life to possess.

“ Noble, generous friend !” return'd she with a sparkling transport that absorb'd her tears. “ How little am I worthy of so flattering a regard : yet there is one who will amply acknowledge it, and plead my excuse for an error,—shall I call it a crime ?—which has cost me so much anxiety.”

“ May I hope to see ”—

“ That I dare not promise ; for he is proud and poor : too rich in the gifts of nature, not to feel the injuries of fortune, and to fear lest every one should cause him to feel them more deeply. A conduct like yours Sir, a conduct which indeed every word and action led me to expect

expect, tho' a harass'd and timid mind, counteracted the conviction, alone could have empower'd me to converse thus.— Unable indeed to look forward with confidence to any other branch of my family, I had long rested my hopes upon you: I thought I perceiv'd the friendship of years, in the acquaintance of a few weeks, and am proud to say I was not deceiv'd."

"Rather allow me to be proud of it!— but let me conjure you to compleat your confidence."—

"Mr. Nugent is not at present here: many reasons deter me from promising an interview without his concurrence; but you may depend on hearing from one of us before this hour to-morrow.—In the interim,"—

"I understand you," answer'd I rising, "and will intrude no longer. It is fit indeed I fly for my own sake, an indisposition that renders you but too interesting. Remember that I shall attend with

impatience the moment of serving you, and have indeed some right to demand it, since it is the only one that can prevent my thinking this the most unfortunate of my life."

Tho' I might have utter'd this compliment without its having any real relation to my feelings; yet George, that was not the case. I was animated, touch'd with the languor which had diffus'd itself over her features, and trembled in her voice. A sentiment of softness and anxiety, an indescribable and restless somewhat, pervaded my heart; and it was not till after two hours riding, that I could descend to the vulgar language of life, or accomodate my features to the smile of vacant politeness. The Lady I saw no more, but in the evening a note was left for me by a countryman, informing me, "that a friend, who interested himself in the

the circumstances mention'd in the morning, would to-morrow have the honor of waiting on me with a letter from Mr. Nugent."

The morrow, you need not doubt was expected on my part, with an impatience and curiosity rarely to be felt: it came at length, and in about half an hour after my father and Lord Somerset rode out, the enclos'd was deliver'd to me.

S I R,

The personal recapitulation of events in which either party are deeply interested, is what a delicate mind cannot but shrink from, and a proud one in some instances fear; its only possible resource consisting in the consciousness of its own integrity, and its high opinion of that on which it reposes. But as there are some characters who hardly wait the stamp of

intimate knowledge to impress esteem, I will venture to flatter myself there are others who *only* wait that.

When Lady Helen told you, Sir, she had already made a choice, she perhaps, wanted courage to add, that the being such was the only distinction of its object; and that his situation, originally obscure, had long been as dependent on her family, as his happiness will ever be on herself; that wavering between two professions, he was destitute of any: and after travelling with Lord Spenser, less as his tutor than his slave, return'd to England, with knowledge he knew not how to apply, and a taste for the sciences which render all application but to them insupportable. But why should I speak in the third person? Is it not to own myself susceptible of the false pride, I dare to condemn?—I lov'd Lady Helen before I left England, and carrying

carrying with me that passion which is capable of refining the coarsest minds, found it every hour nourish more strongly the taste for sedentary and romantic pursuits, which had been my first. I returned to a contest too strong either for reason or philosophy; to behold a form matur'd into beauty, and an understanding flatteringly prejudic'd in favor of mine, even during my absence. To politeness, to distinction, in a word, to love. I had yet courage and integrity enough, to represent all its dangers to her; to efface the colourings of romance, to paint the thousand insidious passions which might one day creep into the recesses of tenderness, and taint every joy with regret. As a man, I could not rise to her sphere, and in uniting herself to me, she would only be degraded to mine; nor had I any compensation to offer for the loss of innumerable advantages, but a heart too tenderly

attach'd to her happiness, not to justify even her receding. Her answer was rather worthy of herself than me; at once delicate, tender and considerate, breathing an esteem so feminiz'd into love, that my heart was scarce more flatter'd than my reason. We hazarded four months since, the common forms of the Church, without fearing any thing which regarded *that*, would be known to a dissipated and indolent family. How to make it so was indeed a difficult undertaking: to reveal it myself was of all steps most improper, and every day increas'd the timidity of Lady Helen. If the tale, Sir, should to you appear worthy an advocate, it will receive honor from your becoming such. I look up to you with the respect I have conceiv'd for your sentiments: how far the conduct of either may impress the other, remains yet to be determin'd: of mine, the sincerity of its avowal

avowal is all the recommendation I can offer, and its importance the highest flattery.

I have the honor to remain, Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

EDWARD NUGENT.

There was a bold, and even haughty spirit, throughout this letter, which, united with the obscurity of the person, rather increas'd, than dissipated the anxiety of my mind. Folding it up thoughtfully, I turn'd to the bearer, and told him, "I should have been much better satisfied, could it have been render'd convenient to Mr. Nugent to have met me himself; since I was too sensible of what was due to all parties, to wish to shock a stranger with observations or enquiries, he might regret being under the necessity of replying to."

H 5

"Mr

“ Mr. Nugent’s motive for commissioning a stranger, Sir,” answer’d he, “ was, I rather think, to allow you the power of making those enquiries. It is so little his nature to shrink from observation, that I am persuaded it would wound him to feel another embarrass’d how to offer it.”

“ A great panegyric, Sir ! I hope, nay, I am willing to believe, he merits it.— His letter, (for I mean to deal as candidly with you as the occasion demands) is such as prejudices me in favor of his *understanding*. but the wide difference between that and the heart, need not be explain’d : and where happiness is concern’d, the latter is so infinitely more important than the former, that they will not bear a competition.”

“ Surely not, Sir ! and to impeach the one only, is to affix a stigma beyond that of error : I do not mean to vindicate his, but simply to learn how far it appears excusable in your eyes.”

“ To

“To seduce a young lady and of rank”—

“To *seduce*, Mr. Erskine!”—The manner in which this was spoken, awaken’d my attention to the speaker. A sparkling and intelligent eye, now fix’d with firm animation upon me, was the only peculiar distinction of his features. His address was grave and simple, and his whole person that of one who demands a respect to which he is accusom’d. “To throw aside a deceit,” continued he, “unworthy of both our characters, and perhaps better calculated to excite, than suppress dissention, the man who has now the honor of conversing with you, Sir, is the same who lately intruded upon you by letter: if I was induc’d to embrace the latter method, it was by the urgent intreaties of one I am not accusom’d to deny; but as I knew not a being on earth to whom I could properly entrust the delivery, I thought it possible the coolness of both

might be preserved under the idea of a third person.

“To say you have not surpris’d me, Sir,” said I, pausing, “would be absurd: perhaps, had I been better inform’d, I might have spoken more delicately; but to retract would be a folly: since, were I even dispos’d to give it the gentlest term, a union where inequality of fortune is so great, and circumstances so peculiar, will, by the world at large, I fear, ever be denominated a seduction.”

“When I address’d Mr. Erskine,” returned he with a sort of haughty calmness, “it was because I thought him unlike the world at large. A general appeal, is what the mind conscious of rectitude, will not always submit to; and if it descends to a particular one, it is because it discerns particular merit. The frigid air of titled importance, Sir, was never the object of my respect; and if you dare not be, what

I believ'd you, I dare retreat from your future interference."

"*Dare*, Mr. Nugent! you have brought an ill-omen'd word into our meeting.— Thus advanc'd however, as the relation of Lady Helen, I *demand* your explanation. Her honor, her happiness, are in her own hands; but the respect due to both, it is the part of her family to guard; and when I remember they might have been mine, I call upon you to answer for them as such."

"To a demand so made," return'd he, "I have but one answer; let that determine which is to be her future protector."

"As you please Sir," replied I coldly. He was going, but pausing at the door, added, "I may have been too rash; at least, before I resent an injury, I ought to cancel an obligation. Your delicacy yesterday conferr'd one upon me where I was most sensible of it; and when you reflect,
Sir,

Sir, what a generous mind must suffer, which, inwardly acquitted, sees itself brought like a criminal to the bar, you will not be surpris'd that it so easily takes alarm, at the smallest appearance of prejudice or pride. A subordination of ranks, is, I am but too sensible, one of the necessary evils of society; and how can I add, without an egotism which my very soul disdains, that there may be a union of hearts and understanding, which may set aside the law of man, for that of Heaven. On a subject of this nature, a *personal* one, I blush to speak but by my actions: to them in future, I make my appeal, and will submit Sir, to find you my enemy, till my conduct shall oblige you to become my friend."

I have given you the words, but the manner was peculiar to himself. His tone was at once so intrepid and so calm, you would have thought reason had resum'd the
entire

entire possession of his mind, had not his eyes betray'd wounded pride, and his features glow'd with a consciousness of superiority. I was struck with him; and saw for the first time the real man; too much agitated either for hypocrisy or design: the man worthy of Lady Helen, and capable of reflecting honor on her choice. I had indeed done her the injustice of supposing, I was to see one whose person was calculated for seduction, and whose manners were no less elegant than her own: but it had never occur'd to me that I should distinguish nothing marking in either, till awaken'd to that pitch of indignation, when the mind proves itself most strong, or most shining. He had reach'd the door, when I stopt him.

“Your language and sentiments, Mr. Nugent, throw all appeals beneath them. I am struck with an understanding which so nobly corrects mine, and could never
have

have pardon'd myself had I discover'd it too late. Allow me the honor of your hand, Sir; and if I have treated you indelicately, think of it rather as the error of my head than heart. I should despise the latter, did I suppose it capable of taking part with the malice of fortune, or undervaluing those, who want nothing towards ranking with myself, but that which I am vain enough to wish my least distinction."

He instantly return'd, and with an ardor no less striking than his former impetuosity; while a ray of latent pleasure shot from his eyes, and reduc'd his voice to a calm and pleasant tone.

"It is mine to apologize, Sir," he replied; "I might have remember'd that as an utter stranger, I had no claim to your respect, and therefore impeach'd your honor in requesting your interference. But how hard is it to repress that sense of
manly

manly equality, which, while it makes our merit in some ranks, becomes our crime in others! I now indeed feel myself most sensibly your inferior, and most touch'd with regret at being so. My letter may be said to comprize the history of a life, too unimportant to have engross'd you a moment, but for other considerations. My father was a Limner, under the patronage of Lord Somerset; and as I was design'd for the Church, I had a classical education allotted me. It was my misfortune however, to lose that father, at an age when he became most necessary both to my situation and my morals; and the promises of Lord Somerset, died with him: he still honor'd me however, with the notice paid to one whose very existence is suppos'd to depend on our smile, without knowing I had a spirit which would have induc'd me to prefer the meanest rank to such a one, had not other

other ties than those of interest attach'd me to his family. Lady Helen was at that time solely confin'd to the country, and had frequent opportunities of distinguishing me. With a mingled sensation of transport and reproach, I at last believ'd I could perceive she *sought* them. Reflection was awaken'd—Lord Somers, if he had not been in all instances just, had nevertheless been in some, kind: to rob him of his daughter, by improving what might be only a casual and childish preference, would have been treacherous; and after a few struggles I determin'd to solicit, what I thought my character for study and retirement might enable me to obtain, and which, whilst it separated me from that part of his family where alone I could find danger, did not entirely disunite us. The rest I have told you Sir. With Lord Spenser I pass'd three disagreeable years on the continent; which nothing indeed but a love of enquiry could have

have render'd tolerable. The few letters however I addrest to Lord Somerset, during that interval were seen by his daughter, and neither honor or prudence were proof against her preference on my return."

The rest of our conversation was chiefly compos'd of mutual testimonies of esteem, and schemes for opening the affair to the family; which important business, I at length found it necessary to undertake. Thus behold your friend, like a second Atlas, with the whole load upon his shoulders. The more indeed I reflect upon it, the more I perceive the disagreeables I have to encounter: Lady Somerset is at heart my bitterest enemy; her Lord, is but the creature she makes him, and my father is at once jealous of them, and me. Too partial in his opinion of my talents and understanding, he does not

do justice to my heart, and considers me as one whom he is rather to be vain than fond of.

I shall therefore no doubt be regarded, secretly at least, as the fomentor of discord, and the abettor of a union, calculated to exclude one branch of the family from shining in the world. To withdraw that supporting power I once so deeply felt the want of, would however be a meanness no interest of my own could palliate.

"Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,"

"Not light them for themselves."—

And the heart that is "*unborn* to cherish," deserves not to *be* cherish'd. Besides I have wrong'd Mr. Nugent, and owe him a reparation; shall I repress the *error* of an inferior, and not dare to defend his merits?

merits?—Your heart I am sure, has already in my name renounc'd so unworthy a thought.—How fortunate, when we can make a virtue of obeying its impulses!

Oblige me by settling the purchase you mention'd with the enclos'd. I do but return obligations, not confer them, and have only one apology for not noticing it immediately.

H. H. E.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXII.

*To the Hon. Henry Herbert Erskine—From
Mr. Obrien,*

St. James's-Street, Feb.

MY thanks attend you for the matter you enabled me to settle; for which I would send you my note did I not believe you would rather consider it as an affront than otherwise. The forms of an usurer do well enough at three-score; but where power alone circumscribes will, (the case ever I hope with us) the testimonials of the heart are worth a coffer-full of scrawls: for what is asking a man to sign his name, but telling him in genteel terms you think him a scoundrel?—Here let me stop to congratulate thee on the first volume of thy history.—Four sheets! didst thou think, my good friend, there was but one woman in the world? For till there

is

is *but* one, allow me to wonder at the patience that could tempt thee to wade (and with such solemnity too) thro' the tale. How far knowledge of the world may be a *pleasure* I know not; and can only advance that it may sometimes be a *service*: since, take my word for it, those heroic sentiments with which your heart is so touch'd, would never have been utter'd, but from their knowledge of it; and three simple words would have adjust-ed matters as well with Mr. Nugent, as the pen of a Scuderi. I like the fellow for his keenness; and tho' I do not perceive all the *grandeur* of his soul, give him due credit for observation—nor shall he want a friend if I can be of service to him. Part of your letter I read to Miss Vernon—the girls like example you know; especially on those mock-modest occasions when they would give their souls to be over-rul'd: and with all the gentle urgency

urgency of love, laid before her the propriety of our union. But whether the little devils have learnt from romances, that matrimony is as compleat a dose of opium, as it formerly was; when every Darby and Joan, dreamt peaceably over the history of the past, and were as effectually dead, as if one ceremony had been read over them instead of the other, I know not.—But the nymph remain'd inexorable; and surely if *modern* matrimony is not a temptation, where shall we find one? Or what avenue of the female heart shall we touch, when extravagance, intrigue, and folly fail? One little form, now privileges licentiousness, and the wedding ring, becomes, like that of a forcerer, a spell by which every virtue is at once excluded and defied. It is still however, a golden one, and has its conveniencies; therefore, tho' not particularly ambitious of figuring either in the King's-Bench,
or

or Doctors-Commons, (those goals to which the votaries of Hymen so regularly run,) I am determin'd to enter the lists; and, when once I have fairly past the fatal gulf, lead as decent a life as youth and vivacity will allow. Rare morality! and good resolutions, Herbert, if they hold: if not, I shall die with the consciousness of having *intended* well; and let us but turn our view from the *writings*, to the *lives* of half of our philosophers, and I am afraid their merits may be compriz'd in as moderate an eulogium.

Bravo! most noble Don Quixote. I have just heard afresh, the history of your exploits. The beau monde, are in arms about Lady Helen—the tale is this moment imported, and every gentle nymph eager to inhale the delightful intelligence, before its poignancy be lost by extension.

'Tis but decent that, in quality of confidant, I should strut a little on the occasion; shew my own importance, and become the magnet of every sparkling eye in the circle. Adieu.—Miss Sutherland is just about half what Sir George describes her—tastes differ—but the girl is pretty.

G. O.

L. E. T.

LETTER XXIII.

To George Obrien, Esq.—From Mr. Erskine.

THE history of my exploits, like most histories, becomes dullest towards the denouement.—Matrimony, the period to romance, is generally as fatal to the wit of the writer, as to that of the parties; and what can more truly prove the small, but cankerous wounds, hid beneath its veil, when even the eye of fancy can scarce trace the scar, and impotently leaves it to be felt. Nugent, is a worthy fellow; perhaps he would have been more meritorious, had he been less happy: but where the heart and reason become so delicately interwoven, who shall dare to say, they could have stood guiltless? Each wears the robe of the other by turns, and we follow the lucid ornament without knowing which

it hides. The tenor of Nugent's general conduct, must now become the test of his life; and he who dar'd to think himself superior to common laws, must rise far beyond common virtues, or incur a censure proportion'd to his presumption.

The fatal intelligence I had undertaken to communicate, was receiv'd by my father with so unpropitious an aspect, that my hopes with respect to the rest of the family, which were not too sanguine, faded apace. But were our *good* qualities as infectious as our bad ones, George, what should we not aspire to! the supineness of esteem, was soon strengthened by that pride and impetuosity I borrow'd from those around me; and Mr. Nugent found me a warm advocate at least. The rage of Lady Somerset, in particular, was, for some time, such as no party could stand; tho' perhaps of more service than

a milder conduct could have been. The passion that flames up to phrenzy, if it does not disgust, yet by leaving that of all others behind it, will soon entirely annihilate them; and the wish of soothing prevail'd with my father and Lord Somerset, even over resentment. But what dupes are we to our foibles! These people, intoxicated with grandeur and wealth, did not perceive that the only crime they could alledge against Nugent, was the valuing too highly, what their very indignation prov'd *they* thought inestimable.

It was at length agreed, that Lady Helen should be commanded to retire, with Mr. Nugent, to a seat which devolves to the former from her grandfather, named Mulberry-Mount; whence, when our dignity is appeas'd, they are to be recall'd. Lord Somerset announc'd this tender decision;

which he did with more kindness than I had expected; and my father, on whose heart the tears of a woman, (in which we have the honor to resemble) never fail to impress themselves, set pen to paper in one of those eloquent discourses, where, tho' little is said, it is of a nature never found unwelcome to any age, sex or rank; and which he presented, with no bad grace, to Mr. Nugent. I shook hands with the latter with a cordiality which only waits the stamp of time, to mature into a most perfect esteem. But faith! that angel his wife, almost cost me a pang. Gratitude! what is it but the most dangerous, the most seducing of all charms; the lustre of that eye which I had so often admir'd when *sinking* beneath mine, appear'd absolutely irresistible, when irradiated by mind, it fought my gaze, and concenter'd a thousand testimonies more flattering than love itself. When she yielded

ed

ed to my embrace as to an asylum, and, even in departing, appear'd to rest on me, the precious charges of fortune and fame. With such a woman! whisper'd romance—you might be as wretched as folly and inconstancy could make you, added reason; and reason was heard—or rather, to be honest, an ideal angel glided between me and the real one, took full possession of my bosom, and smil'd me into a thousand deliriums, your ill-omen'd epistle came to dissipate. It was the very moment it ought to have come, and yet, upon my soul, a sermon would have been more welcome. So in mere gaieté de coeur, you treated Miss Vernon, with my epistle; and civilly turn'd my own arms against me.—Blest be the good genius that render'd her inflexible!—not to *injure* you there, is the extent of my kindness; but as to *serving*, it does not come into my rule of metaphysics. Beauty was familiar to my sense, before I knew in what its essence consist-

ed ; but from the moment I beheld that charming girl, goodness and loveliness have been so intimately connected in my ideas, that I am sure a virtue could not wither in her, without depriving her of a grace. "Rank enthusiasm!" perhaps so—the more dangerous for me!—*You* are too secure to dread any thing, and know me indeed too well, to think (matters thus far carry'd) I should interfere. Lady Helen, I find goes first to London, and I am permitted to attend her there. *Adieu:*

H. H. ERSKINE.

L E T.

LETTER XXIV.

*To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen
Nugent.*

Spenser-House, Feb.

REPORT has ere this inform'd my beloved friend that I am no longer worthy or entitled to address her by that name, till she deigns to confirm my right. That I have sunk the honor of my family and fortune in obscurity, and must owe every future distinction either to my own heart, or to those of others. Could I as easily vindicate myself to the world as to her, how little should I lose! but the vulgar ornaments of prosperity are obvious to every eye; whilst merit is discover'd by sympathy. And what would it avail me to plead the distinctions of Heaven, to those who feel them too little ever to be sensible of their value? Yet oppress'd

with the consciousness of having decided my own fate, certain that I am to stand or fall in every eye by the event of that decision, I rest panting upon those hearts that yet remain to me, for soothing and support. I have only a few hours to pass in London—but they are important ones; they are to introduce to my friend, the man who makes *my* happiness, and the man who ought to make hers. Oh Sophia! how much have you to learn, and, if our souls really respond, how much have you to feel. Come to me if possible directly.

L E T.

LETTER XXV.

From the same to the same.

One in the Morning.

YOU will be surpris'd to hear from me so immediately after our separation; but I am too much astonish'd myself, to delay writing. Ah my dear friend! how little justice did our eyes and hearts do Mr. Erskine, for that absence and reserve which shorten'd your visit, and threw a chill upon my feelings, the retrospection of a conduct so eminently generous to me, could hardly counterbalance. The not offering to attend you home, was an omission, so singular and so unaccountable, that I could only suppose he had something of material consequence to communicate to us; and perhaps, no three people, so intimately and tenderly connected, ever supported a more vague conversation, than

succeeded your departure. He at length arose—to separate with frigidity was impossible; his heart expanded with its own benevolence, and once more animated his features. Mine swell'd with grief, to think such hearts as his and Edward's should part before they were familiar to each other. “I do not leave you Sir,” said I, when he saluted me, “sensible of the value of your esteem, I could not so soon prevail upon myself to resign it; and have introduc'd in Miss Vernon, the most flattering of all memorials. I am vain enough to think, you will find every thing of me in her, but those graces peculiar to herself.”

“I almost injure, so far as to believe you,” return'd he; “but does Lady Helen suppose me the most insensible of all mortals, that she dares involve me in so imminent a danger?”

“Two reasons alone can be offer'd for encountering it.”

“One

“ One of which, I am to guess by your smile, is the reverse of that I have mention’d. Will it gratify your curiosity (if *ladies* can be suppos’d capable of such a sentiment) to learn, that I have already discover’d I ought not to trust myself? Had Obrien been unknown to me, an engagement so public would have been some tie upon my honor, but as my most intimate friend, I hold it a point of justice to avoid a thought that may injure him.”

“ You certainly misunderstand something: Mr. Obrien, I am confident is nothing to Miss Vernon.”

“ Ah Lady Helen! I find it as impossible you should be sincere with each other, as with us. Shall I tell you news of your friend?”

“ It will be news indeed, if of the nature you appear to suppose.”

“ Had suppositions only interfer’d, I had long since return’d the generous regard she paid me when a stranger, by an avowal

avowal of those sentiments I felt on first ceasing to be such. Obrien has assur'd me that every preparation is now making for their union; it is delay'd only by an exertion of that influence which is so soon to be his happiness."

"You astonish and alarm me!" I paused, warn'd by the rising indignation of his countenance, that sincerity was dangerous, and coldly added, "Mr. Obrien, is grossly deceiv'd, he is vain, he is in love; the respect she has shewn him as the intimate of her family, has misled him. Miss Vernon is sincerity itself, and I am confident never gave him any other encouragement than those general instances of politeness she extends to all who are attached to her."

"Say then to all who know her," cried he with a flattering abruptness—"I am stagger'd, but I must confess not convinc'd. Part of my sentiments he knew, and therefore I think, *dar'd* not deceive me.

me so far. Why does the mutual traffic of insincerity carried on between the sexes, teach each to distrust the most amiable of the other!—I knew my own heart, I am not unacquainted with human nature;—there are periods in every passion, at which it may be curb'd; I was vain or fortunate enough to believe, I had assum'd the rein in time, and that the respect I owed my own honor, and that of my friend, could conquer the weakness of my heart. If he has deceiv'd me, those ties are cancell'd; and I may have the merit, of owning myself sensible of hers. I am impatient for an explanation."

"Doubt not," return'd I, "but he flatters himself, and will be sufficiently punish'd in being undeceiv'd." I stopt; the smiling earnestness with which Mr. Erskine look'd at me, made me smile in return.—'The stress I had lay'd upon the word *undeceiv'd*, struck him I believe more forcibly than I intended it: love, pleasure, hope, instantly

instantly mounted to his eyes as if to demand their object, and slowly subsided on missing it.

He then recounted, ludicrously enough, the accident which first introduc'd him to your notice, and his mysterious speech to you, on the idea of your being Lady Georgina. I began to think we should never get rid of him; and indeed, good-humour and good-spirits made him such excellent company, that it was a proof mine sunk, when I even remember'd the hour. He at length started up, rallied himself on his intrusion, and left us equally delighted with that vivacity, which tho' not absolutely wit, learning, or sentiment, is the most winning mixture of all. Adieu my dear friend.

L E T.

LETTER XXVI.

*To the Hon. Henry Herbert Erskine, Mount-
Herbert. — From Mr. O'Brien.*

St. James's-Street.

AND so my good friend, thou hadst really such a sublime opinion of me, as to suppose it impossible, I should have so little honor as to dupe thee, or so much love as to dupe myself. Honor, I think was the word; a good convenient weapon enough, when we have a mind to act upon the offensive, but let it be worn amongst friends without trying its temper. A fellow more vain would not have been displeas'd at the compliment. What! swear thee into despair, only to preserve my own hopes! I, an humble adorer from the age of hanging-sleeves, and jointed babies, to that delightful period when vanity matures the blossoms, time hardly open'd.

Thou!

Thou! the mere acquaintance of a day. Really I begin to perceive, that thou art not so much to blame my want of honesty, as that of impudence; for had dear self-love but popt the weight in my scale, jealousy officiously threw into thine, both had been satisfied. Win the nymph, however, and keep her if you can. You, fancy you know her, I am sure I do; and when I tell you, she is as ignorant of her own mind, as you or I can be, it is a truth you will one day be convinc'd of. Lady Helen, is the mere sentimental correspondent, every modern nymph adopts, as the Knight's-errant of old did their squires, only to be the living chronicle of their own exploits. And the face is not more varnish'd for the lover, than the mind for the friend. With a taste for dissipation, Miss Vernon has not yet *nonchalance* enough, to plunge into it with a fashionable avidity; ambitious too of rivetting

vetting her chains, she wants courage to give up the rage of conquest. I see her faults, and yet love her, because I know none of her sex who have fewer, and am certain she breaks no resolutions with me she did not *intend* to keep. Thus, most reverend father, have I laid before you my confession, make your advantage of it. A friendly monitor within, tells me I should not quarrel with a worthy fellow, were he to rob me of half the women upon the globe. But remember I stand free. If you should one day be convinc'd my discernment has outstepp'd yours, if you should find I have an influence you were not aware of, in a word, if kind fortune makes the damsel mine, swear to me, as I most freely do to you, to forget we were rivals; let us shake hands, and decide *ten years hence*, which was the most lucky.

Farewell,

G. OBRIEN.

L E T T E R XXVII.

To Lady Helen Nugent, Mulberry-Mount.

From Miss Vernon.

Pall-Mall, Feb.

WE struggle in vain, my dear friend, against fortune; I begin to believe there is a spell attends every thing relative to Mr. Erskine and me. Why have I then the weakness to indulge a partiality which already disturbs the tranquillity of my mind? Surely the world has a more powerful claim to the merit of our best actions, than we are dispos'd to allow, since we find it so much more capable of regulating them, than reason itself can our hearts.

As I knew not Mr. Erskine was in town, and much less conceiv'd the idea of seeing him, I was not a little surpris'd yesterday

yesterday evening on his being announc'd. As Mrs. Davenport had been out the whole day, I had but just quitted my dressing room.

"You find me Sir, employ'd like a true woman," said I, turning from the glass before which I stood.

"We are so apt to judge of the feelings of others by our own, Madam," he return'd gaily, "that I cannot help supposing every thing which reflects such a form must have powerful attractions. I know not how I should apologize for my intrusion, had I not more than a selfish gratification in view: but the sight of your carriage assuring me you were not abroad, I took the liberty of adding my own respects to those I was commission'd to offer from Lady Helen and Mr. Nugent. I had this morning the favor of a letter from the latter,* and a slight indisposition of her

*Omitted.

her Ladyship has occasion'd a silence which she fears may surprise you,"

"You do me honor, Sir; I had indeed felt some uneasiness at not hearing from Lady Helen, which I am sorry to find was too well grounded. Their journey I hope was pleasant."

"If I did not fear to intrude, I would answer your question in Mr. Nugent's own words.—It is but an indifferent recommendation to my friend's letter," added he, smiling as he offer'd it, (probably at the recollection of some grateful acknowledgments it contain'd) "to assure you that you will find nothing *true* in it, but the character of the writer." A favor which would at any other time have been so highly desirable, I could now have readily dispens'd with; and, tho' to decline the perusal was impossible, the becoming thus the sole object of his attention, prevented my understanding ten lines of the letter distinctly. I saw however thro' the whole,

a generous and noble heart, avowing such sentiments as must ever conduce to the happiness of that friend who is dearest to mine. Something expressive of this I said on returning the letter, and something Mr. Erskine said in answer; what, I know not; he was studious to keep up a conversation which prolong'd his stay, and I was at once flatter'd, pleas'd and confus'd. A sense of impropriety, however, at length involuntarily directed my eye to my watch: the same good-breeding which had prevented his remembering the time, forbade him also entirely to forget it. He arose, apologiz'd for detaining me, and, as it was plain I was dress'd for a visit, express'd his hopes of mingling in the same circle, in terms so pointed, that I could not without affectation avoid mentioning Mrs. Seymour: nor was I displeas'd on finding he *would* be of our party. He offer'd to lead me to the carriage; but against this a
thousand

land mighty nothings instantly arose. I had been already flutter'd: to be announc'd at the same moment with him, to have the eyes of the whole room upon me, and Obrien's perhaps in particular; to be sensible that the smallest enquiry of either, must inform him we had been *tete à tete* a full half-hour before our arrival, were all circumstances too formidable to be encountered. I had scarce declin'd accepting Mr. Erskine's hand, under pretence of an appointment which would detain me a short time longer at home, when a rap at the door seem'd to confirm my words, and, while we were yet standing, Mr. Obrien, came in. I was speechless. To have it appear that *he* was the visitor for whom I had delay'd my engagement; for whose sake I had indirectly hasten'd Mr. Erskine's departure; could any thing be more cruel! *All* were surpris'd, I do not recollect any were disconcerted except myself. Mr. Obrien, utter'd a few vague questions

questions about Mrs. Davenport, in his rambling way ; all of which (to an apprehensive mind at least) seem'd but design'd to hide the real object of his visit, and, after a familiar interchange of compliments between the gentlemen, Mr. Erskine sufficiently shew'd me his opinion of the interruption, by again taking leave. The measure of my mortifications, however, was not yet filled up : imprest solely with the idea of being left alone with Obrien, and that too in the light of an appointment, I arose also, and apologizing to the latter, under pretence of being late, declar'd my intention of going : thus confirming the truth of my expecting no other visitor. Mr. Erskine, look'd at me—Ah ! my dear,—it was not with *love* ; neither with mark'd surprize : it was an enquiring glance, that seem'd to penetrate my very soul, and rob it of its few remaining powers. My ill-boding heart assur'd me I was regarded by him rather with a sensa-

tion of contempt, than tenderness; and when the carriage drove away, I had not a sincerer wish in the world, than that of never being seen by either gentleman again. Such was not my good fortune.—Obrien, was at Mrs. Seymour's almost as soon as myself; and Mr. Erskine arrived in a quarter of an hour. His stay, however, was short; he address'd me only once: and vanish'd soon after the entrance of Lord Melross. But if it was mortifying to lose the esteem of the son, how much worse was it to become the object of attention to the father; who, after tormenting me with the most absurd gallantries, (of which I but too plainly shew'd my aversion) assur'd us, he knew no pleasure so great as that of *entertaining* the Ladies.

Your indisposition, my dear and valued friend, is I hope slight, and will soon allow me to hear from yourself, that you are
happy

happy. Thro' the mild medium of your bosom, every pleasure will reach me, divested of those cares which environ more selfish feelings: curb, suppress them then in time: you only *can* do it; and teach me to merit whilst I possess your friendship. Say to Mr Nugent, every thing, if possible, that he deserves, from

Your Affectionate,

SOPHIA VERNON.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount.

YOU do me but justice, my dear Sophia, in supposing me happy. But why do I mention myself only? Can I, ought I, to appropriate a merit I derive from the virtues of another? Too fortunate in being their object, let me but imbibe enough to return the felicity I receive, and I shall have little indeed to regret. In Mr. Nugent a manly understanding gives dignity to tenderness, and inspires the desert it is solicitous to trace. What pride is there in reflecting that I dare appeal to *himself* for my vindication, and, instead of pointing out a titled non-entity, have the happy certainty that he will appear but to shine, and add a brilliance

ance to rank he could never derive from it. "*Il sangue nobile è un accidente della fortuna ; le azioni nobili caratterizzano il grande.*" Seldom alone with you, oppressed with anxiety even during the short intervals we mutually seiz'd, I blush'd to tell a love, the knowledge of its object only could justify, and still more, a union, of which I knew not yet the misery or happiness. Accustom'd to shrink beneath the apprehensions of censure, that love was indeed ardent, which urg'd me to brave it. And it is, perhaps, hardly possible even for you to conceive what I suffer'd on the reading of that card, Mr. Nugent, voluntarily threw into the way of Mr. Erskine, in order, by awakening his curiosity, to forward the discovery of our secret. How noble, how amiable was the conduct of the latter ! delicately solicitous to shun acknowledgments, he every hour entitled himself to. The truly generous man, my

K 3

dear,

dear, is not he who confers a favor, but he who wishes to spare another the necessity of receiving one: who feels the level of human nature only in those distinctions by which others appear elevated above them; and dares to extend the union of prosperity and merit beyond the bounds of his own person. I know my family, however, too well. Time may open their eyes; but it is not to themselves I can at present owe their pardon; and perhaps, I should hardly be entitled to hope it, had they not rather render'd me the ostentatious daughter of their fortunes and honors, than their hearts: and I still tremble at the idea of a *rencontre* with my brother, whose temper no one can curb.

Our situation is as tolerable as we could expect. The accident of my being born here made my grandfather settle this seat upon me,

me, with the little estate, (not equal to five hundred a year) which surrounds it. At fourteen, I had the honor of naming it, which I did in childish imitation of Mount-Herbert; nor, till now, have I visited it since. Mr. Nugent seems to think there may be considerable alterations made for the better; which, as they will serve to fill up his time, will surely be an advantage.

Mr. Erskine, before we left town, desir'd to hear from us; and I was not sorry by conveying my remembrances thro' that channel, to give him an opportunity of paying you his *devoirs*; but these men are such intractable animals, that it is impossible to get them out of their buckram style: and they may epistolize half a year, before either of them will discover more than, that he is the other's "most obedient humble servant." Mr. Nugent is too—what shall I call it? Not absolutely

too proud, but too *mannish* to solicit confidence; and Mr. Erskine too gay, or too indolent, to offer it. I am therefore unable to judge of what I most wish.—
Adieu, my dear Sophia; and think me,
in the name of both, ever sincerely

Yours,

H. NUGENT.

H. H. E.

L E T T E R. XXIX.

To George Obrien, Esq.—From Mr. Erskine.

Grosvenor-Square.

THE journey I mention'd to you at our last meeting, is at length resolv'd upon, and my departure fix'd for the latter end of next week. What matrimonial star presides, however, I know not, but it is surely a favorable one to you, for I had to-day a formal declaration from my father, of his intentions with regard to Miss Sutherland. From the preface, indeed, I began to conclude, he design'd her for himself; till consanguinity fortunately interven'd, and sav'd him, probably, the mortification of being a second time jilted. He spoke much of her beauty, her merit, and misfortunes; enforcing every argument with an air of generosity, which render'd it difficult to be confuted.

without impeaching myself. Tho' aware of this stroke, from some hints which have escap'd Lady Somerset, I had cautiously avoided appearing so; and cannot even now help supposing, the officious interference of a third person, has precipitated their measures. My negative, I am not to learn, has very small weight either on this, or any other occasion, unless I maintain'd it in a manner disagreeable to myself. But tho' from what you have advanced, and I have observed, I can have little to hope from Miss Vernon, I must have still less before I forego the pursuit. She was born to captivate. Her discourse, her silence, her coldness, nay even her inconsistency, have all a nameless grace, which touches every fibre of my heart. So soft, yet so dignified, so apparently mistress of herself, that we should swear she never knew what timidity was, did not the mantling vermilion of her cheek deepen into a confusion

futation of the error. Love in *her* presence is no longer gallantry or *reverie*; it is an enlivening and animating principle, which seems to cherish every virtue. I shall see her before I leave England: yet not so much with the view of explaining my sentiments, as of judging how far the explanation might, at a future period, be acceptable. Tho' propriety and prudence forbad my objecting to a journey, which, it is pretended, was solely propos'd in order to establish the validity of my mother's marriage in France, my stay there will certainly be short; nor shall I pay any other attentions to Miss Sutherland, than those, respect and relationship demand. Abruptly to offer Miss Vernon a tenderness unauthorized by my family, while so many jarring interests remain to be reconciled there, would be an equal affront to her rank and her delicacy. I leave her with regret, but at least with honor; and my return will be mark'd with happiness, or

disappointment, in proportion as it removes those obstacles which now arise between us. Our plans I know are different; *you* tread the regions of romance, and are for avowing a ten years servitude of darts and flames; I would, if possible, make an interest in the heart, before I claim it; and have the transport of blending the blushes of modesty, with those of reciprocal love.

Sir George Irwin is arriv'd in town. But I am sorry to say, quite as *tramontane* in his appearance, as when he first had the misfortune of offending your eyes. He embraced me with an ardor which was fatal to *my* hair, while his, receiv'd from it the only dust it seem'd conscious of for a century past.— This ceremony over, he interrogated me with much solemnity upon the subject of a pair of slippers; from whence he made a sudden digression to Lady Helen, and Mr. Nugent; which, with an episode upon
his

his great-coat, compleatly occupied his attention for half an hour; when a most sober dialogue succeeded: where we alternately discuss'd counts and landladies, toasts and postillions, with equal warmth and precision. For, Sir George is always eager, and never clear; "blundering round a meaning," which, tho' often strong in itself, is render'd weak by its expression, and while it gratifies the heart, seldom fails to jar upon the ear.

And now for France!—Fortune, it is plain my good friend, is on your side, when she leaves the field thus open.—For tho' I do not absolutely believe assiduity *ensures* success in love; yet have I so good an opinion of it, as to venture half my hopes on that foundation; the whole of which, to say truth, amount to so small a number at present, that I should not risque much had I plac'd them in the account. Nevertheless, experience, that most valuable

valuable of acquisitions, is never to be purchas'd at any expence but our own; and tho' it is four thousand years since women have been pointed out as Syrens, few have been the heroes who have dar'd to emulate our worthy friend Ulysses; and of the few who have, I am afraid half live to regret they were not agreeably deceiv'd.

Perhaps I ought not to tell you what I have heard of some of the party with whom you left town: only one hint allow me, without being officious, to offer; the dice and the bottle are ill-suited companions; and, as I cannot hope you will have temperance to forbear both, I only recommend to you not to unite them.

Yours sincerely,

H. H. ERSKINE.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXX.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Miss Vernon.

Pall-Mall, Feb.

ON coming down to breakfast this morning, I was surpris'd at the sight of Mr. O'Brien, who has been out of town some days past. Little dispos'd to admit him to an intimacy of so unceremonious a nature, a mark'd chagrin I believe was instantly visible in my features: and tho' it was not possible *then* to avoid taking my place at the table, I secretly determin'd that a false delicacy should no longer prevent my reminding Mrs. Davenport, he had not the claim of relationship upon *me*. She slightly excus'd herself for detaining him, as an invalid whom she dar'd hardly confide to his own care: to which he added, "that *her pleasure* would, he fear'd, prove a much more acceptable apology

logy to Miss Vernon, than his health."—
The tone, rather of dejection than reproach, with which this was utter'd, made me lift my eyes, which receiv'd a confirmation in his looks of real indisposition. I therefore endeavor'd to mingle in the conversation, and thought it never more agreeable on his part: trifling without being frivolous, he seem'd to have just sadness enough at heart, to correct the flights of fancy; and struggled to be gay, less from a sensation of pleasure, than the wish of inspiring it.—I felt a sort of interest in soothing, tho' I dreaded to flatter him; an interest, to which I more particularly yielded, as he appear'd himself to grant his mind more affected by his frame, than inclin'd to use the common pretext of the frame having suffer'd from the mind.—Perceiving, however, he prolong'd his stay beyond our repast, I was going to quit the room, when Mrs. Davenport was summon'd

mon'd from it. He made a motion to detain me. "Deny'd any prerogative more interesting, Miss Vernon must not withhold from me the punctilios of an acquaintance at least: Will her good-breeding allow her to leave her visitor alone?"

"As she did not appropriate the compliment of the visit, she cannot incur the censure," returned I, still offering to go."

"Delicate reproaches," said he, "require delicate minds to comprehend them: I am too gross, or too incorrigible, to be so easily answer'd.—But why talk of compliments? Ah Miss Vernon! of all those happy hours I have dar'd to steal from yours, this single one will perhaps alone deserve that chilling epithet. Yet, before I resign the hopes I have long unfortunately cherish'd, let me receive from your lips the confirmation of their fallacy."—He paus'd; and to be silent was perhaps, the gentlest of all confirmations
on

on my part; yet he seem'd disappointed and hurt. I would again have retir'd, but fear'd some burst of passion I should find myself under the necessity of resenting.—He continued;

“Your eye, Madam, seeks the door; I have studied it too long, not to understand the language; and if I further intrude, it is as much for your sake as my own. Cold, inexorable, as I have lately found you to every tender solicitation, I know your understanding too noble, your heart too generous, not to feel the wounds you inflict. I can do you justice,—but why that word? *More than justice*, my highest admiration never confer'd, and less, resentment itself cannot grant, whilst it beholds you.”

“I find,” cried I, affecting to smile, “I must fly in self defence: for I feel alternately too vain, or too humble, for contest, as reason or credulity prevail.”

“Have

"Have you then any contest to fear?" replied he anxiously, and seizing my hand—"Ah! with what joy"—

"Beware! joy and sorrow are so nearly allied, that it is better to avoid either, lest we encounter both."

"Too true," added he; "for what could allay the pleasure I feel in seeing, but the regret with which I hear you." "I will spare you that pain at least," return'd I laughing.

"Not till I have compleated the purpose of my visit. It is serious, tho' to smile has been so long the habit of my heart in your presence, it hardly knows how to forget it. Allow me then once more to appeal to those days, those years, when I was permitted to look up to Miss Vernon for a happiness"—

"Can it be possible, Mr. O'Brien is indeed so serious?" cried I; willing to interrupt him. "I had suppos'd"—

"Gravity,

"Gravity, I have seen enough of the world, Madam, to know, is a very unfashionable, and even a very uncomfortable companion. It is a tax upon the hearts of our neighbours; they do not easily pardon us for levying. But can a *lip-deep* vivacity impose upon minds like yours? A vivacity too often rather the ebullition of chagrin, than the offspring of genuine cheerfulness. Such has long been mine. —I have deceiv'd you—myself," added he, after a moments hesitation; "I could smile Madam whilst I had only *indifference* to combat; but disgust."

"*Disgust* Sir!"

"I have a monitor that cannot misinform me. I am become wearisome and insupportable.—You fly my friendship, and find my presence importunate—I feel you do."

"Good Heavens!" cried I warmly, "into what extremes do you fall! Do yourself, I intreat, the justice of believing you

you have every claim on my heart, but those even reason and gratitude sometimes fail to inspire: a heart, too sensible of the want of every natural tie, not to rest with distinguishing esteem upon those who have honor'd it with theirs. Unallied, and unprotected, yet precipitated into life, I hover like a bird upon the extremity of a branch, fearful of plunging into that element, where, if not self-pois'd, I must unavoidably sink; yet, difficult as is the task, I will endeavor to be frank; and it is difficult Sir, even to the frankest of our sex, to shock one of yours with a prohibition a delicate man will never desire repeated, and a delicate woman can never utter without regret."

"You anticipate me, Madam," replied he, with a stifled emotion which I thought seem'd to partake as much of pride as tenderness. "Would you could as easily—"
—he paus'd, sigh'd, and took two or three turns

turns across the room—then again seizing my hands, added, with more gentleness,

“Adieu then at once my hopes, my fears; all that *made* my happiness, or destroyed it.—Yet in losing you, I have at least, the consolation of seeing no other succeed in what I have dared aspire to; since if in the circle of her friends, Miss Vernon *herself* cannot select one worthy of her, how much less will those be empowered who are juster to her merits? But you are impatient,—you are distressed,—I hasten to release you; I will have a distinction in my fortitude, my tenderness could not claim; nor, from this moment shall you ever hear a profession pass my lips, which, frigid as you are, yours may not answer. You are the only one who will think the sacrifice little; yet when you remember, dear and charming Miss Vernon, how much it has cost *me*, let your friendship console me for that loss, the whole universe cannot at present indemnify.”

nify." The more than *seriousness* with which he spoke, shock'd and affected me.—*Tears* from Obrien! I should sooner have expected incense.—A loud rap at the door reliev'd both.

"That babbling blockhead, Sir George Irwin!" cried Obrien, turning peevishly from the window. "To intrude now too! a fellow who thinks wisdom lies in talking; and would swear a dictionary the wittiest book in the language, because it contains most words."—This apostrophe on the character of Sir George, did not entirely agree with his former agitation; and only confirm'd me in the opinion I had long entertain'd of the extreme incongruity of Mr. Obrien's feelings. Sir George enter'd to prove the truth of his reflection; and, after fatiguing me with the most prolix civility for a quarter of an hour, address'd himself in terms of cold politeness, to Mr. Obrien, who sat wrapt in *reverie*.

"Have

"Have you seen Mr. Erskine to-day?" said the latter.

"I breakfasted with, and left him but this moment," replied the Baronet; "nor should I have done it now, had not particular business engag'd him abroad."

"Sir George is too flattering!" retorted O'Brien, with one of his suppress'd, eye-convey'd smiles.—How goes on the propos'd alliance with Miss Sutherland?"

"It will certainly take place."

"I am sorry for it!" said O'Brien abruptly.

"And why so Sir?" return'd Sir George with no less warmth; who felt his vanity piqued, at the implied contempt.

"Because I think beauty a poor equivalent for talents and understanding. Erskine was born for much higher pretensions: and I am mistaken if both his views and his genius are not infinitely more elevated."—Sir George, whose eyes sparkled between anger and satisfaction, could, I perceiv'd,

perceiv'd, have embrac'd him for one half of his speech, had he not felt mortified at the other.

"Miss Sutherland," interrupted I, "or I am deceiv'd, has a strong and brilliant capacity."

"A sort of gaiety that passes for wit, because it steals meaning from her eyes; but when you know Erskine as well as I do, you will value him better."——*Indeed!* thought I.——"It is true he has wit, spirit, and gallantry," continued Obrien, "reflection beyond his own years, and generosity almost beyond any; but *matrimony*," added he dryly—

"You think these not ingredients for," said Sir George.

"Is often held in reserve for recruiting a constitution, or estate, when *wit, spirit and gallantry* have destroy'd them." And this said, he took his leave.

"If Mr. Erskine does wrong," said Sir George, after a pause, "that young man

will be the principal cause of it. But I beg pardon! to Miss Vernon I believe he has the honor of being related."

"To me!" said I, rous'd from a *reverie* at the sound of his voice, "no indeed: you remind me of asking the favor of Mrs. Davenport's company." Our attention was awaken'd by a second rap at the door, and Mr. Erskine himself was announc'd. I started—I blush to think how *much* I started. Sir George look'd extremely grave.

"I thought you had business Sir," said he, as his friend was paying me his compliments.

"The first of all business,—pleasure Sir George!" return'd Mr. Erskine laughing, tho' he colour'd between surprise and confusion;

"I beg your pardon, Sir!" return'd the Baronet, with a face that spoke him not too well pleas'd.

"Nay

"Nay, no gravity, my dear Sir George! can you be surpris'd we forget what is due to our friends, when we so little know what is safest for ourselves?" The good man, who only perceiv'd Mr. Erskine meant a compliment to me, without thoroughly understanding what, gave him a vacant smile of reconciliation; and the servant entering the room, to inform me Mrs. Davenport was engag'd, Sir George look'd at his watch and wish'd me good morning.

"I did myself the honor, the *pleasure*, of waiting on Miss Vernon," said Mr. Erskine, taking his seat near me, "in order to receive her commands before I set out for the Continent."

"The honor Sir, is mine," return'd I.

"You will not flatter me so far as to say the pleasure," replied he smiling;—"tho' sure either must be *only* flattery. I fear I have intruded; there is a gravity, shall I say a *politeness*, in Miss Vernon's
L 2
behavior,

behaviour, that represses every sentiment, but the *respect* with which I waited upon her."

"Upon my word Sir—I fear, I am at a loss, politeness!" repeated I incoherently; and sensible enough that he meant *stiffness*, tho' he did not use the word.

"The elevated affability which dignifies some minds, Madam, is but too apt to incapacitate those who are accustom'd to admire it, for the ceremonious politeness of the world; which comprizes every thing, but that of which I can only *feel* the loss."

Mrs. Davenport fortunately enter'd to relieve me. "What have you done with Obrien? cried she in surprise.

"Really Madam I can't say—I fancy he is gone," said I, overwhelm'd with confusion and chagrin.

"Without a carriage?" looking earnestly thro' the window, "and so dreadful

a day too! he has a violent sore throat and cold."

"Mr. Obrien, Madam," return'd I petulantly, "is better able to judge for himself, than any person can for him; I, least of all, do not take the liberty of interfering." I now look'd thro' the window, and saw for the first time, that it was indeed a most compleat cold thaw; which, uniting with the snow, made it wretched walking. She gave me a card, in the answer to which she wish'd my concurrence, and withdrew to write it. Mr. Erskine, who had remain'd for some time silent, now enquir'd when I heard of your health and Mr. Nugent's.

"If I was not the most disinterested creature alive," cried I, endeavoring to speak gayly, "I should not extend my regard to the latter; since I fear that when Mr. Nugent gain'd a wife, I had the misfortune to lose a correspondent."

"Probably from the idea that, by doing honor to matrimony also, you mean shortly to return the omission," replied he laughing; "but when I remember how many will regret an event, which can only make one happy, I may be *selfish*, but certainly cannot be generous enough to wish it."

"You will do me the honor of offering my respects and good wishes to Miss Sutherland," said I.—Why *did* I say it at that moment! but the conversation between Obrien and Sir George, had taken possession of my mind, and perplexed both my ideas and my hopes.

"I fear'd from the first that I had intruded," said he rising;—"but if Miss Vernon *ever* knows, the powerful, the unconquerable temptation which has misled me, I am certain I shall claim her pardon. But since to wish her happy is a form politeness prescribes, generosity may forgive the extending the desire to myself. I shall certainly take the liberty of uniting her

her compliments with those of the family, to Miss Sutherland; whom, during my *short* stay in France, I shall have the pleasure of seeing."

He bow'd twice; and, perceiving I did not seem dispos'd to return his compliment, but by a courtesy—again bow'd and withdrew.

"Wit, spirit and gallantry," are thus, you see my dear, very improper for a husband in Mr. O'Brien's account; Mr. O'Brien need not have said it. But an unguarded frankness is one of his first merits; it would be therefore hard to wrest it against him. Yet why did Mr. Erskine, if he has real engagements, affront me by compliments that had even more than gallantry in them? Why insinuate his *short* stay in France—his merely *seeing* Miss Sutherland!—or rather, why do I perplex myself with doubts, when one effort of my reason might decide my fate, and give me

to a man, over whom I have indeed a flattering influence, when it can subdue even levity itself.

Obrien, I find this evening is much indispos'd; but constitutions like his are not easily shaken. I saw Lord Melrofs, pass to-day in Hyde-Park; and had indeed, my fears of a visit. Nothing I think can be more alter'd; he seems even to have lost the desire of looking well; and, in the midst of his state, appear'd but, as Lord Chesterfield said, "rehearsing his funeral." Lord Spenser is return'd from Bath, and look'd so like you, I was near embracing, instead of courtfeying to him.

My kindest compliments attend Mr. Nugent.

S. VERNON.

L E T-

LETTER XXXI.

To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen
Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount, Feb.

MR. Nugent, I beg leave to assure you, will by no means accept your kind compliments, after the very unkind one you paid his wife; who, as she is of an irascible disposition, finds herself very maliciously inclin'd, on being arraign'd thus, and condemn'd without a hearing. I will not say love absolutely spoils the memory; but I will certainly affirm that it does not assist it; since, if you take the pains of examining, I believe you will find you were my debtor some time past for a letter. The insanity of the head however, will save the convicted criminal, nor can a less plea than the insanity of the heart assist you.

I had yesterday a visit from Lady Amesbury and her daughters, who are now at B—. Edward was unfortunately from home, to the great mortification of the misses; who sat primming, and smiling, in expectation of his entrance; not able I believe, thoroughly to settle, whether it would be on two legs or four: and were much astonish'd to see me wear just such a gown as themselves, pay my compliments like the rest of the world, and, so far from addressing them in the language of romance, discuss my household affairs with all the sobriety of a Lady Bountiful. They had seen me, they said, from the Lord Chamberlain's box, on the birth-night, and were much delighted with my dress, tho' they then little imagin'd, they should so soon have the honour of knowing me. Good souls! this they call *knowing me*! and then, they proceeded to expatiate on the advantages of happiness over wealth, and all the common-place heroics
natural

natural to their age : for the eldest, is not yet seventeen, and her sisters each a year younger. The Dowager, who is the only part of the family to whom I had the honor of having been introduc'd, was the widow of an eminent Merchant, who left her a fine jointure, and his girls ten thousand pounds each. She afterwards married Sir Thomas Amelbury, from whom she is since parted. If I may judge from her countenance, she is perfectly good-natur'd, and seems to have but one fault in the world, that of fearing every body will think her so. To prevent which she is forever reprimanding her daughters when present, and steals every moment of their absence, to describe the excellent order in which the young ladies are kept; whilst they on the contrary assure you "mamma does not mean what she says;" and indeed prove it, by doing what they please. Love and a cottage, however, was by no means

means an eligible subject in the opinion of her Ladyship. To relieve her, I took up one she had too much delicacy to venture upon, and assur'd them, that, if I might be allow'd to judge, happy as I was in the lot I had chosen, I thought the chances so much against every woman who decided *solely* for herself, that I should scarcely again have courage to encounter those anxieties I had formerly felt; and should one day even dread, lest my children might be equally rash, and less fortunate. —“ A life devoted to retirement,” continued I, “ no morning visitors, or evening parties, an uncertain rank, an æconomical table, no equipage, few servants, and fewer amusements, is indeed a reverse reason may teach us to support, and to which a permanent and ardent tenderness may even give charms; but bold is the woman who shall affirm her tenderness will be always ardent; and still bolder, ladies,” added I, smiling, “ she who affirms her husband's

husband's will always be so. And if it is *not*, what shall supply its place in her heart? Nay, even in her time? What spleen, what languor, will pervade every hour!—How will imagination hang over the past, and double all those sacrifices of which she too late knows the value!"

"Your Ladyship does not then, *upon the whole*, approve of unequal marriages," cried the good Dowager, brightening at my prudence; whilst the poor girls found their hearts sink so terribly, at the sound of no morning visitors, equipage, or parties, that I question if a whole circulating-library could rebuild the shatter'd fabrick of romance.

"Far from approving, I highly condemn them Madam, *upon the whole*," return'd I, qualifying in my turn: "unless with the consent of relations. But when you remember, ladies, what my reason has offer'd, think how strong is the impulse of my heart, which, alive to such objections,

ons,

ons, dares yet avow itself, not only contented but, happy." And here, while the damsels were debating what answer they should offer, Edward made his appearance at some distance on the lawn; if lawn we may call what is but an irregular slope.

"I protest, here comes a smart fellow," cried Miss Harriet, starting up.

"Indeed Ladies you have misnam'd a mere rustie, that is Mr. Nugent."

"Mr. Nugent, Mr. Nugent!" and each head mechanically turn'd, like soldiers upon drill.

"I declare—I vow—I"—What they declar'd or vow'd, each wisely kept to herself, and Edward in a moment, was in the parlour. "Ah!" thought I, looking at him with delight, "thou art come to overturn all the maxims of thy sage wife!" for I never saw him more perfectly—charming,—I was going to add; that however, is but a horrid word for a man at best, and absolutely

absolutely shocking for a husband. The air had improv'd his complexion, his eyes sparkled with his heart, and his hair just retain'd that universal shade of powder, which marks the gentleman. He fatigued himself with bowing to the nymphs, who courtesy'd, and courtesy'd, and courtesy'd again; as if they would have convey'd an awe, no language had words for. The conversation that follow'd is not worth relating, unless I could extract his part of it from the rest. Mine I committed to my other self; too well satisfied to hear, to be loquacious; and the ladies, highly pleas'd, departed, with many invitations to become more neighbourly, and another profusion of compliments.

I have thaw'd Edward's ice into writing again to Mr. Erskine, in a style, which, tho' not absolutely familiar, I think invites a friendship and confidence I shall
be

be surpris'd to see with-held.* Some author happily says, "that the English are warm friends, but distant acquaintance." And this seems to be the case with our gentlemen; who I believe have as high an esteem for each other, as any two gentlemen can have. I am sorry Mr. Erskine is obliged to go to France, but do not think the engagement with Miss Sutherland, will take place.

Our united loves and compliments are ever yours.

HELEN NUGENT.

*This letter is omitted.

L E T.

LETTER XXXII.

To Lady Helen Nugent, Mulberry-Mount.

From Miss Vernon.

Pall-Mall, Feb.

WHAT strange impatient creatures my dear are these men! can you suppose Obrien has really thrown himself into a fit of sickness? Ah! if women were equally impetuous, how would their constitutions sustain disappointments, they must even blush to own!

Mrs. Davenport has absolutely persecuted me to visit him. How inconsistent a step would that be, (without reverting to its impropriety) after the formal renunciation that has taken place between us! and for what purpose? Since I cannot suppose, like the princesses of romance, I can restore health with a look. Yet that I feel
sincerely

sincerely for him, Heaven is my witness ! nor will my mind be thoroughly at peace, till he is well. As to his aunt, she is absolutely miserable, and has pre-doom'd him already, from some nonsense she dreamt a week ago ; shocking enough ; for it broke my rest merely on the recital ; which she, as usual, gave us on the succeeding morning. After tormenting me with asking my opinion of every physician of eminence I knew, she at last call'd in one I never saw before ; with whom she is extremely delighted, because he flatters her ; nor dare I tell her the idea of danger he has communicated to me, and which he wishes her to be inform'd of.

I am unhing'd and distress'd. Surely my seeing him can be of very little consequence ! he will not himself grant even that his complaint arises from vexation ; yet the doctor says it is so ; Mrs. Davenport strenuously maintains it, and affirm'd that

few false hopes, which I might reserve to myself the power of overthrowing when he is re-establish'd, would do more for him, than all the faculty. If it should be so, and,—that he loves me passionately I believe; because he loves every thing passionately, that he loves at all.—Yet by what privilege do the men think it easier for us to suppress distaste, than for them to conquer affection!—Distaste! it was too strong a term; at least in the present situation of my mind, all terms appear so. With what different eyes do we view our conduct to those who are well, even tho' suffering, and to those whom we have the remotest chance of assisting to destroy. Reproach obtrudes upon me, tho' I think I stand acquitted of guilt. But never my dear, will I again enter into conditional engagements, I or rather, conditional encouragements. Farewell.

Ever your
SOPHIA VERNON.

LETTER XXXIII.

To Edward Nugent, Esq.—From Mr. Erskine.

Dear Sir, Dover.

THE esteem with which you profess to honor me, I will not again be so much my own enemy as to disallow my title to. That delicate flattery, which springs from the partiality of those by whom it is offer'd, is perhaps the only one we can with pleasure receive. A generous heart may be gratified, without being dup'd by it, and find its virtues less weaken'd, than supported, by the ideal excellence to which they are thus led to aspire.

I write to you from the very region of dulness and dirt, where I am condemn'd to remain, till the zephyrs condescend to curl the billows more favourably, and waft me to the opposite shore; soon, I hope,

Yours truly

to

to waite me back again. The uncertain state of my father's health, tho' it has precipitated my journey, will not allow of a long absence; and I have a powerful motive for wishing to return. What you have heard of the proposals respecting Miss Sutherland, is undoubtedly true. It is my misfortune to have a friend to whose heart I might trust every thing, but whose judgment perpetually falls into the common error, of supposing that which is calculated to make him happy, will be equally desirable to all others: an error so generous that we censure it with regret, and know not how to correct, tho' we suffer by it. Sir George Irwin, accustom'd to consider me in the most partial point of view, thinks he has chosen, in Miss Sutherland, the only woman I *ought* to chuse. Nor has it once occur'd to him that, of many I have view'd with admiration, one may have engross'd my love. An unfortunate

fortunate hour of convivial exultation induced him to open his views to Lord Somerset, and my father was made a party in them ere I knew such were form'd. The scheme had been before a matter of private debate; by one side it was eagerly adopted, and at length settled in a manner satisfactory to all. I alone had the vexation of finding myself engag'd, at the hour of my whole life when I had least desir'd it; or, to speak more openly, when any engagements, not immediately dictated by myself, must fill me with regret. To Sir George, I was silent; since to shew him that solicitude on some points, amounts to officiousness, was an indelicacy, I could neither shock him, nor myself, by being guilty of. To Lord Melrose, duty, and reason, demanded I should be more explicit; but, by a peculiarity of ill-fortune, I discover'd that the woman from whom, if I know my own heart, its future pains and joys are to spring, had so far offended him (tho' unconsciously)

consciously) by a neglect of gallantries ill-suited to his age, that she was the last he would hear of. Expostulation upon an offence not granted, tho' obvious, was impossible: and I had the additional mortification of reflecting, that the very circumstance which had sunk her in *his* opinion, must unavoidably raise her in *mine*. To *demand*, I was not entitled; but to withhold, is a privilege of which no tie can deprive us. We parted therefore without resentment on his side, or compliance on mine, and never renew'd the subject till the hour when he gave me packets to deliver to Miss Sutherland.— If therefore I should be thought capricious or trifling, in not offering to Miss Vernon those professions I intruded upon Lady Helen, let her Ladyship accept my justification. I have indeed another motive for silence, of which I cannot think without pain, tho' reason forbids my excluding it.

Lady

Lady Helen is probably inform'd, that from the time I quitted France, I bore my mother's name, tho' ignorant from whom I derived it, and not very solicitous to dive into a secret, I fear'd might be disgraceful. At nineteen, I went abroad; and having imbib'd at the university, more taste for the army than the gown, was indulg'd by Lord Melrofs, with a commission on my return. Accident, soon after that return however, put into my hands some papers left for me by my mother. I learn'd with pride, I had a *legal* claim on Lord Melrofs, and, with youthful enthusiasm, that it had cost one parent a life of misery, and tinctur'd that of the other with disgrace. I saw my mother in every amiable light misfortune throws upon her victims; and with a mad impetuosity, reproach'd where I should have soothed. The consequences were obvious.—The claims my father had once disallow'd he

he continued to reject; and I gave myself up to pride and despondency. Of my numerous connexions, I retain'd only Sir George Irwin, and Mr. Obrien.— The friendship of the former was founded on that I bore his son; similitude of years (probably similitude of follies,) attach'd me to the latter; who with capacity and judgment sunk both in pleasure, and gave me advantages over him, which tho' I could not flatter myself I ow'd to nature, I was yet flatter'd to possess. A strong and superior genius often shone thro' his faults, and a fascinating vivacity gave them lustre. Our confidence was unbounded, and our attachment sincere, To *me* he has ever been the same; but to *himself* he is less just: and I have seen with regret that his errors daily increase, whilst the virtues but linger in his heart. An absurd idea of *knowing* the world has made him its dupe; his principles have been shaken before he was sensible of their value, and

he will, I fear, become a gambler and a libertine only from the affectation of mingling with both. His confidence in me, is now a habit he is not at the trouble of shaking off; for the world has introduc'd its corruption, and he has ceas'd to love, tho' not to esteem me, from the hour when I unexpectedly rank'd above him: whilst I on the contrary, without esteeming *him*, continue to love him. His attachment to Miss Vernon, as it preceded mine, would be a claim upon my honor, had he not forfeited it by little artifices unworthy of either. He has endeavored to convince me that she is light and capricious, govern'd rather by vanity than feeling, and tho' bound by serious engagements to him, yet weakly desirous of inspiring sentiments, she has neither inclination or power to gratify. Lady Helen did me the honor to confute the charge, it is true: yet so often and so positively

sitively has it been made, so strangely have some circumstances confirm'd it, that belief stands suspended, and scarce allows me to credit that even the impetuosity of passion could dictate so consistent a duplicity. A duplicity equally remote from the tenor of his character, and useless in its effect. For what, but circumstance, can confute the eloquence of that soul, which speaks in the loveliest of all forms? Such is however the consequence of associating with those who are not just to *others*, that the hour of trial ever leaves us uncertain whether they will be just to *ourselves*: and makes the moment when reliance becomes necessary, the first probably that gives birth to doubt.

In thus minutely describing my situation, I have set aside the forms of an acquaintance, and consider'd you as one to whom my heart is already attach'd, from

the conviction of merit. Whom to be frank is to resemble, and whom to esteem is to confer honor on myself. Lady Helen will do me the favour of accepting those respects and good-wishes which will ever attend her, and with which I am, dear Sir,

Your sincere friend and servant,

H. H. ERSKINE.

L E T.

LETTER XXXIV.

To Lady Helen Nugent—From Miss Vernon.

Pall-Mall, Feb.

MISERABLE, harrass'd, and perplex'd, how shall I relate to my dearest friend, events I have scarce courage to recollect? Alas! the unfortunate O'Brien has only a few hours to exist, and those are to be devoted in a manner I tremble to think of. Repeated informations of his being worse have reach'd me every hour since my last: a delirious fever, of which *I* it appears was the constant object, has even defeated those visits, I was twice urg'd in unanswerable terms, to offer; and the impossibility of his knowing me, has prevented even deceit from being of service to him. Mrs. Davenport, who has scarce ever quitted him, came home this morning drown'd in tears, from a consul-

tation of the faculty, who have declar'd his case hopeless. I was urgent, (even to a grief like her own) with the doctor, to know, whether he thought his illness proceeded from his mind, or constitution; since, if to the former, there were no sacrifices, no falsehoods, to which I would not stoop: he told me frankly, that Obrien had been drinking at W——, during the election, and returning with both his mind and blood in the most irritable state, had increas'd a cold, by quitting me abruptly on that fatal morning of the thaw, which had doubtless been the origin of all. I was half frantic at the declaration: every remoter hope, every gentler idea, vanish'd before the horrible one of death; and I even besought them to allow me to try, if I had yet any power of soothing or relieving him. The Doctor protested against my going, as a fruitless effort; and even Mrs. Davenport, no longer wish'd it. Their opposition but fatally increas'd my

my desire. To have made the trial, would I thought, produce a self-acquittance, no other event in my whole life could effect. Mrs. Davenport at length yielded; and with much persuasion, the Doctor himself was brought over. What a dreary period was that which convey'd me to his lodgings. He was sensible we were told; but so exhausted, it was not possible he should see us. I argued, I supplicated, I was not to be deny'd: the idea of his dissolution with every faculty remaining to upbraid me, for not fulfilling an act of common humanity, was too horrible. Mrs. Davenport, at length, ventur'd in, to prepare him; and in about a quarter of an hour, which seem'd whole ages, return'd with the information that he was able to speak, and had been inform'd of my arrival—Trembling, and leaning upon her, I enter'd. Oh! my dear, well may we say *"the preparation is the executioner."* The

M 4

dreary

dreary silence that prevail'd, the feeble light, which seem'd only admitted to mark the utter exclusion of cheerfulness and health, weaken'd every nerve and faculty. Unable to speak, I sat down in a chair by the bedside. He look'd at me in a silence that had something so touching in it, that I involuntarily stretch'd out my hand, and covering my face with the other, burst into tears. He took it, put it to his lips, and sighing as he held it there, still remain'd silent. I would have spoken to him, I even made an effort, but it was a vain one.

"Be less kind, Madam," said he, in a voice so hollow I absolutely started, "unless you would make me forget the respect I owe you. But if I should—you will bury my offences in my grave."

I had no answer but tears, and he was long silent. "Pardon me," added he at length, "I distress you! these however, are

are the first tears you ever shed for me—
—and will be the last.”

“I had persuaded myself, Sir,” returned I, in a low and tremulous tone, “I had influence enough——

“To do what, Madam? to bid me still live, the object of your cold compassion? To see your heart perhaps, imbibe for another, a love like my own?—No! it is these considerations, that have made death even desirable.”

“Do you then reject my sympathy? Oh Sir! judge of my esteem, by my distress.” And bitterly my dear, I wept.

“Nature, accident,” continued he lingeringly, “a thousand circumstances might have effected, what imprudence and love, have only hasten’d.—It is not *you* who destroy me—*you* check’d my hopes—*you* prohibited my tenderness.—If, in the madness of disappointment, I sought death, the crime and the punishment are my own.”

"Of the crime Sir," said I eagerly, and impress'd with a horrible, and vague fear, "Heaven only is the judge; but believe the punishment mutual at least; rather would I"—I stopt, hesitated, and was silent.

"Have sacrificed yourself to the phrenzy of desire," added he. "Generous Miss Vernon! no!—selfish, impassion'd, as I was, had I *liv'd* I could not have consented to that.—Yet the hope, the idea!" he stopt in turn.

"I fear is too late." interrupted Mrs. Davenport.

"To *save* me, it surely is Madam. Sensations, of which no being can judge till they feel them, proclaim every effort fruitless. Yet how greatly would it soften, what nothing can avert——to call you mine!" added he grasping my hand feebly;—"to hold this valued, this beloved pledge, at the moment when nature lingers upon your idea!"——A combination of feelings seem'd to overpower, and silence him.

Paf-

Passive, lifeless almost, I look'd round with unutterable anguish, for some fortunate intervention, that might spare me the pain of refusing, or the still greater pain of granting.—No being however articulated a word, and a cruel, an immeasurable silence, at length laid me under the necessity of speaking.

“Thus situated Sir,” said I, “it would be madness to attempt”——

“Madness!” repeated he with a start that threw me into a universal trepidation, “Which? What?”

“Be calm!” replied I fearing he would relapse into phrenzy.

No, no, no, you hate me still—you abhor my very idea.”

“If I thought” return'd I, too well assured by every eye present, that he was really relapsing, “it would soothe,”—again reluctantly, tremblingly I stop'd, solicitous to be deny'd.

"My name," continued he in an inward and convuls'd tone, "is so detestable, that you resolve not to assume it."—

"No I do not resolve."—Alas! my dear, I scarce remember what follow'd; tears, phrenzy, every thing horrible; till at length, enfeebled by doubt, and distracted with apprehension, I hesitated a faint consent.

Exhausted by conversation, Mr. O'Brien fainted; and I was dragg'd home, to linger out a miserable hour before the ceremony is perform'd. Mrs. Davenport, urg'd by my solicitations, is however again gone to endeavour either to dissuade him from insisting on the promise at all, or to defer its execution for some time at least. During that delay perhaps—horrid thought!—

Altho'

* * * * *
Eleven o'Clock.

Altho' I had given the strictest orders to exclude every one, young Davenport, on the presumption of his name, has been admitted. I recounted to him the circumstances of my distress, at which he wonder'd with the vacant air of a man of the world; and observ'd to me, that by a union so hasty, I might run the hazard of losing two-thirds of my fortune; or at least, from my unprotected situation, of having it litigated; and propos'd that a Lawyer should instantly draw up some deed of settlement. To this it was necessary Mr. O'Brien's name should be added: but our doubts of the possibility was a strong objection, and the asking it, an indelicacy so strange, to minds unaccustom'd to business, that it was not to be got over. I fortunately recollected the deed to Davenport I had formerly declin'd, which answer'd every

every purpose of a settlement; and only wanted the signature to complete it. He instantly fetch'd Mr. Sefton, his partner and joint security, to whom (without mentioning the motives) we declar'd our resolutions; and executed them on the spot.—

—Mrs. Davenport is not yet return'd; perhaps I am already freed; and O'Brien exists no more.—If on the contrary, the sacrifice of a moment, should become that of a life, if he should recover!—But she is here.

* * * * *

Alas! I have no possibility of escaping.—She has used every argument, reason or invention could offer, in vain. A delirium that would be immediately fatal, must be the consequence of disappointment.—Doctor S—, is now as urgent with me to go, as he was a few hours since to avoid it. Not to have seen him at all, would, he says, have

have been prudent ; but to recede would be barbarity.—Most heavily do I go ;—in what situation of mind to return, Heaven only knows !

* * * * *

Four o'Clock.

With a heart that sunk beneath united anxieties, I reach'd Mr. Obrien's apartment. A clergyman, with whom I am told he lodges, was there : and, with an indescribable sensation of horror, I perceived he had been reading the prayers for the sick. Poor Obrien, lull'd I imagine, by the sound of his voice, was in a sort of insensibility, that partook at once of death and sleep. The curtain was between us, yet I could hear him murmur something inwardly, and indistinctly, accompany'd with half starts and sighs.—In one of these he wak'd, and as the wildness of his manner gave little hopes of sense, Mrs.

Davenport

Davenport made a sign to me to remain, whilst she once more endeavour'd to amuse or dissuade him.—I was too much touch'd however, with what pass'd, long to carry on the deception, and the fatal ceremony at length commenc'd. It was confirm'd by tears. compos'd of every painful sentiment of the heart, and we separated, too much agitated on either side for words.—He has since relapsed into drowsiness, and I write till he awakes; uncertain whether to return, or see him once again.—He has sent to solicit the latter, and having found himself much reliev'd from sleep, is once more able to converse.—

“ In what terms,” cried he as I approach'd him, “ shall I acknowledge the inestimable gift you have confer'd on me?—Oh! had it but been earlier—but why image a happiness that, had I liv'd, I
should

should never have enjoy'd! yet as the sacrifice was bought by my life, it will surely be remember'd even beyond it.—This Madam," pointing to a seal'd paper, "tho' but a poor and despicable return for this," grasping my hand, "yet demands your acceptance. It is properly drawn up, sign'd, and attested."——

"And why Mr. Obrien did you?"——

"Question me not," return'd he, with a sadden'd impatience.—"Why did I do it?—*Why* have I liv'd, why died, but for you?"——

"Ah Sir!" cried I throwing myself on my knees by him, "distress me not further either by your tenderness or generosity. Fortune has been sufficiently kind to me, and you have many relations in Ireland."——

"They are above receiving any thing Madam, both by rank and pride. My aunt I have not forgotten there.—But why talk on such topics? Dearest, best beloved of women! I now mean, in bidding you
Lol an

an eternal adieu, to release your benevolence from its task. Years, of youth and pleasure attend you. Years when my eye will no longer follow you with apprehension or delight.—Yet before you live to the world, can you consent to live one month to me? I ask but one month, at that house I purchas'd so lately near Richmond, and where I had vainly sworn to forget you; unconscious of an event which was to be fatal even to love. It is now yours; and the hope of this compliance, is the only one that remains to me.—May I—Dare I?—

“Trifling sacrifice!” cried I warmly, “which friendship might have demanded.—I promise, I swear to you to comply.”—He kiss'd my hand, and, sighing most profoundly, relaps'd into a heavy and death-like silence; only now and then half articulating sentences to himself. I remain'd near him a considerable time, during the first part of which, he sometimes pressed

fed my hand, but did not speak; and at last suffer'd me to go, without appearing sensible I did so. Mrs. Davenport accompanied me home, and seem'd much pleas'd on hearing the request he had made, of my retiring to Richmond; as my stay in town would either oblige me to avow or deny, what it is better should be understood. She herself remains, to make such explanations as may be necessary, and attend to the last melancholy duties; which perform'd, she engages to follow me.

* * * * *

Ten o'Clock.

Those duties are all that remain. The companion of our gayer hours is forever withdrawn, and nothing is left of all that inexhaustible flow of health and spirits, (as we once thought them,) but a form we should now, perhaps, tremble to view.—

Davenport!

Davenport! O'Brien! what a desolation in my little world! Oh Heavens! if the pang of mortality thus vibrates thro' ties so slender, where is the strength that shall support us when it quivers thro' every fibre of the heart! when every hope, wish, idea, concenter'd to one object, leave us, like a crush'd worm, only power to writhe under the tortures of half annihilation.—

I cannot tell you what I feel; it is a sensation wholly new: for of all the mighty circle of human calamities, perhaps sickness and death are those a young mind most fantastically adorns. Nor can any thing but melancholy observation, convince them of that gloom, which, withdrawing every colouring of romance and gaiety, leaves no idea but of a world beyond our conception—beyond everything, but our hopes.

Mrs Davenport thinks it most proper I should leave town to-morrow morning;
which

which I shall do early. O'Brien, on the supposition of my complying with his request, with all the impetuosity of sickness, (which having but one object, is ever peevishly solicitous about that) had sent his servant to Winbrook with directions, and Mrs. Davenport has undertaken all matters here.—His donation, of whatever nature it is, I shall certainly cancel; for never will I take advantage of the tenderness or generosity of any disposition to wound itself. And his relations, will doubtless respect but little, the memory of him by whom they think they are wrong'd.

At Richmond, I shall have no employment but writing, till Mrs. Davenport's arrival, which cannot be under a week; and on our return to town, I hope to take possession of the house, so long talk'd of: tho' the innumerable delays that have occur'd since christmas, have almost tempt-
ed

ed me to believe some evil genius opposes it. How many trifles, will there involuntarily bring back Obrien to my mind, and sadden those hours, in which the sanguine expectations of youth, saw nothing but gaiety, and happiness. He that was so busy, so *troublesomely* officious, as I once thought; Now—alas my dear, how painful, and how necessary, are the first tears we shed. That world, which was before so brilliant, seen thro' their prismatic influence, resolves itself into its real colours, and no longer dazzling the eye of fancy, offers a new species of creation to that of reason.

Expect then to hear from me soon, and remember in the interim, how much I want that amusement, friendship only can afford. — Farewell,

SOPHIA VERNON

L E T.

L E T T E R . XXXV.

To Miss Vernon—From Lady Helen Nugent.

Mulberry-Mount.

A Suspicion of the most terrible nature, induces me to send this by express. Edward should have brought it, had I not dreaded the consequences: but if Obrien still lives, (and my heart forbodes he does) the life of one must have been the forfeit of his treachery. Oh! my dear, my too noble and generous friend, where has your caution slept? What fatal sensibility, what treacherous benevolence has sacrificed you to villainy and art!—If it is not so, let my messenger return, instantly return: he has my orders to deliver this into no hands but your own. I write with a perturbation, words can neither describe, or silence. At any rate, let the man come back

back directly, for, till he does, all will be
tumult and apprehension, in the bosom
of your

H. NUGENT.

End of the First Volume.



ll be
ofom

AC

T.

A

Edw

deab

HA

ob

of

don

ern

tes

to

my

has

lun

per

ct